CHATURANG KATHA

Kathasaritsagara

KUPINIKA

No. 515

PICTORIAL CLASSICS FOR YOUNG AND OLD

CHATURANG KATHA

Rupinika is yet another fascinating story from the *Kathasaritsagara,* Somadeva's eleventh century Sanskrit classic.

The story centres round Rupinika, a temple dancer who dares to fall in love with a poor brahmin youth. As a result, she also falls from grace. This situation is aggravated by her mother, an avaricious old crone, who cunningly strives to keep Rupinika and her lover apart. The plot thickens as the lovers outwit the scheming old courtesan; and the ludicrous and the improbable interweave to give this story an enchanting serio-comic dimension.

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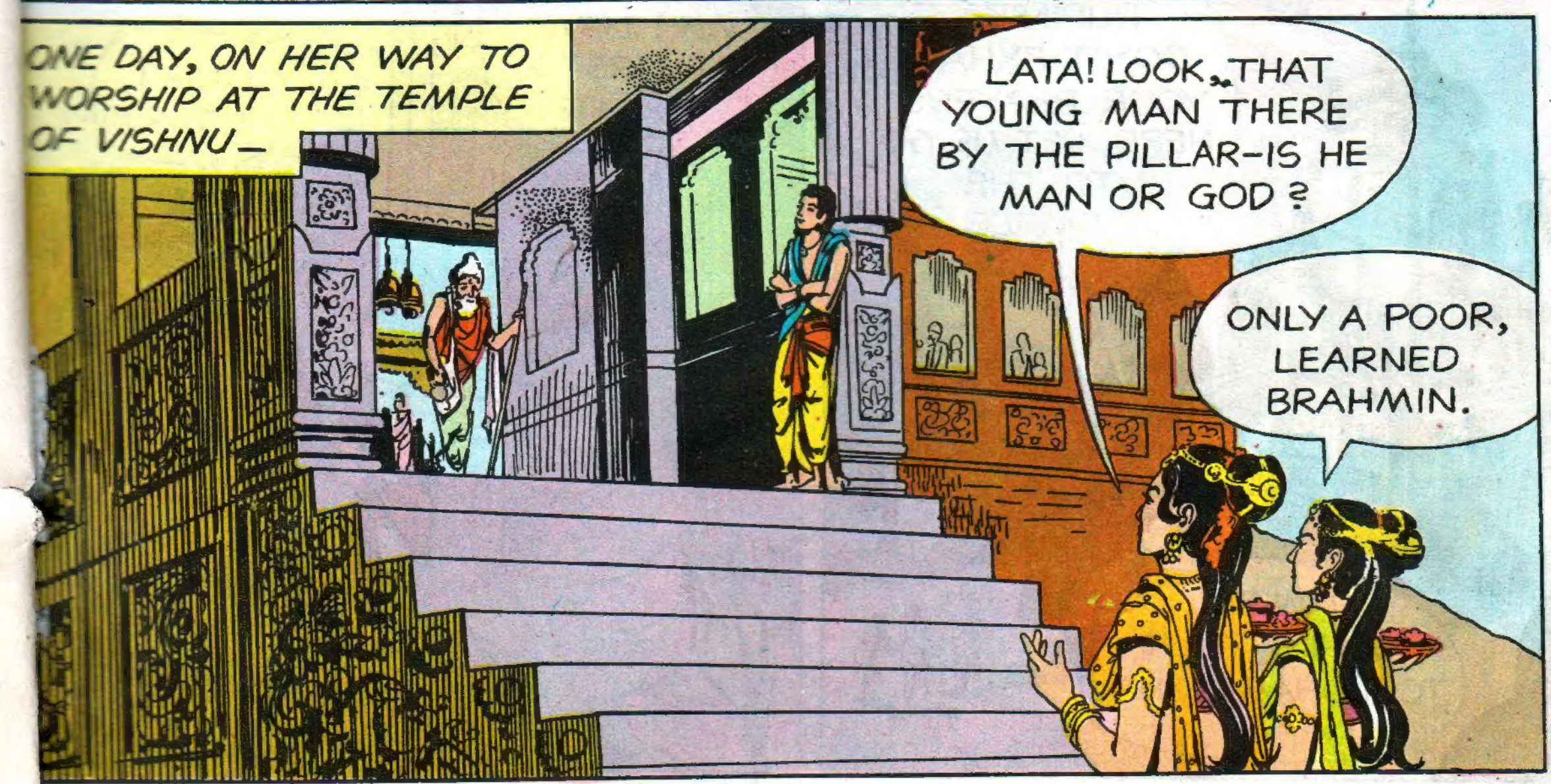
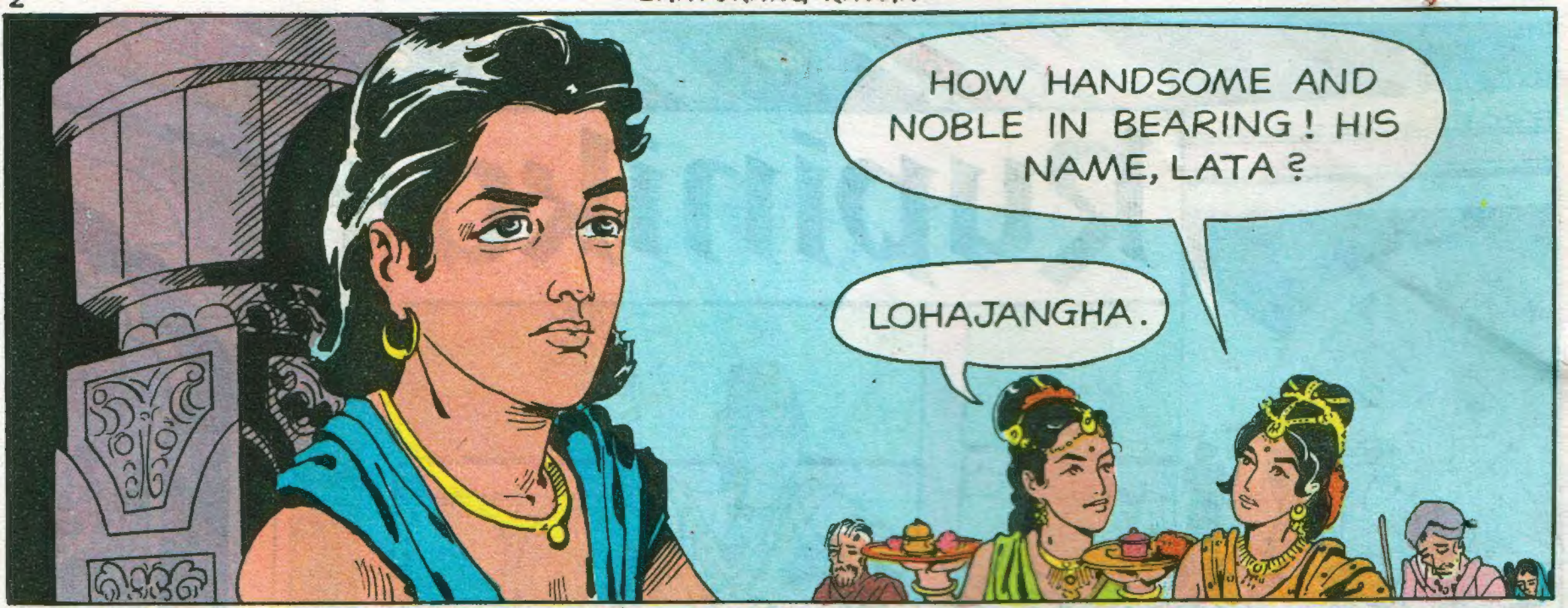
Rupinika

RUPINIKA WAS A TEMPLE DANCER IN THE CITY OF MATHURA. SHE EXCELLED IN MUSIC AND DANCE AND THE FAME OF HER BEAUTY HAD SPREAD FAR AND WIDE.

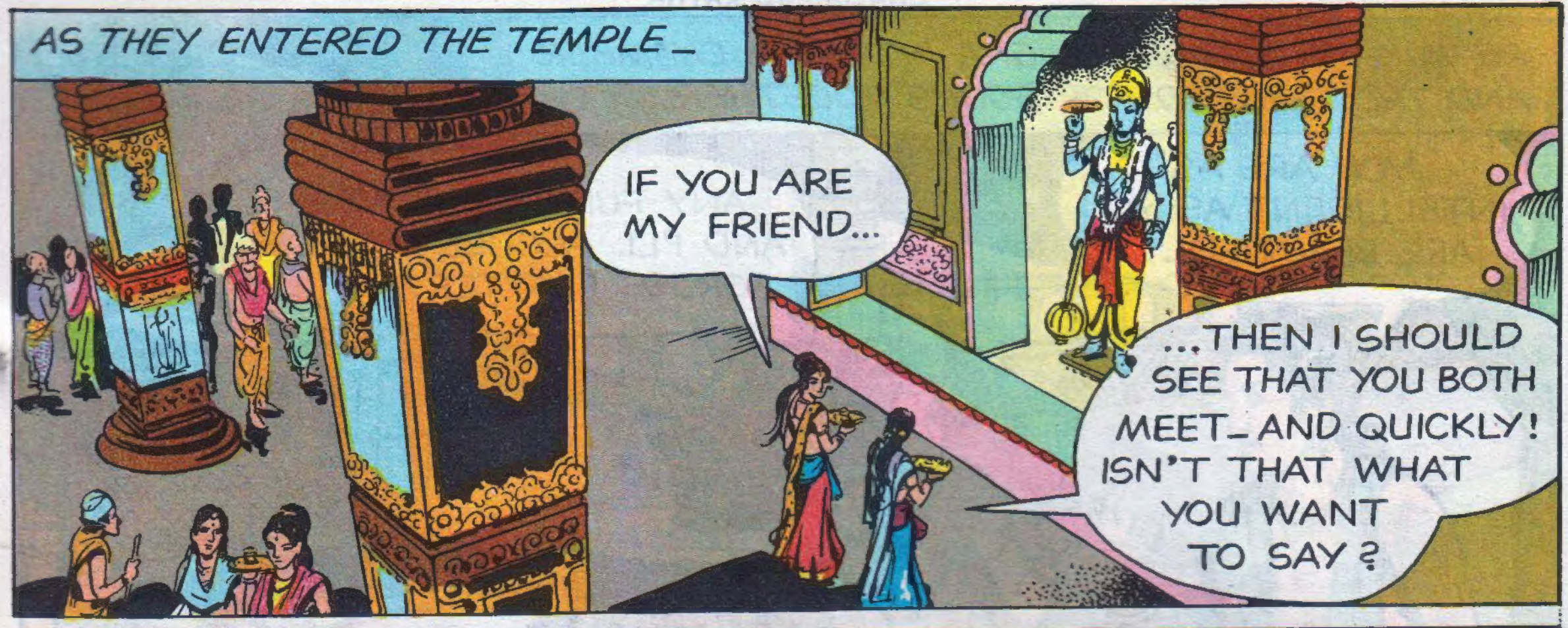


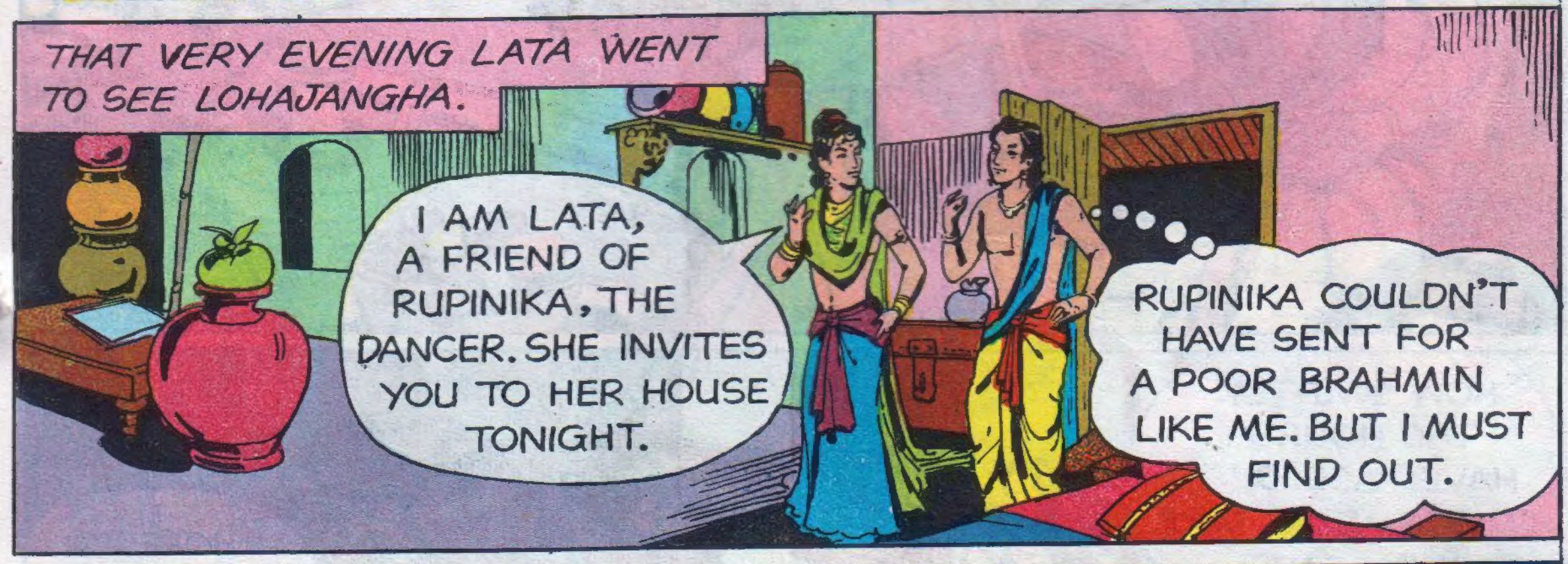

HOW HANDSOME AND NOBLE IN BEARING! HIS NAME, LATA?
LOHAJANGHA.

LOHAJANGHA'S COUNTENANCE CAPTIVATED RUPINIKA.
WHY DOESN'T HE TURN HIS GLANCE TOWARDS ME?

RUPINIKA, DON'T EXHAUST YOUR PRAYERS HERE, LET US GO INTO THE TEMPLE.
I WISH I COULD TALK TO LOHAJANGHA.

AH! LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.
QUIET, LATA.


AS THEY ENTERED THE TEMPLE_
IF YOU ARE MY FRIEND...
...THEN I SHOULD SEE THAT YOU BOTH MEET_ AND QUICKLY! ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY?


THAT VERY EVENING LATA WENT TO SEE LOHAJANGHA.
I AM LATA, A FRIEND OF RUPINIKA, THE DANCER. SHE INVITES YOU TO HER HOUSE TONIGHT.
RUPINIKA COULDN'T HAVE SENT FOR A POOR BRAHMIN LIKE ME. BUT I MUST FIND OUT.

LOHAJANGHA VISITED RUPINIKA AND TO HIS SURPRISE, SHE GREETED HIM WITH GREAT RESPECT AND AFFECTION.
I LONGED TO MEET YOU LOHAJANGHA BUT DIDN'T DARE COME TO YOU STRAIGHT-AWAY. THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN BOLD AND UNBECOMING.
I UNDERSTAND, RUPINIKA; BUT I DON'T DESERVE ALL THIS ATTENTION.

RUPINIKA TOOK LOHAJANGHA INTO HER CHAMBER AND THEY TALKED FOR HOURS TOGETHER.

YOU ARE AS INTELLIGENT AS YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL!

ANY FURTHER PRAISE AND I'LL ACCUSE YOU OF GROSS FLATTERY.

HOW SWIFTLY THE HOURS HAVE PASSED! IT IS TIME TO TAKE YOUR LEAVE.

I HOPE TO SEE YOU AGAIN-AND SOON.

BY AND BY, A GREAT LOVE SPRANG UP BETWEEN RUPINIKA AND LOHAJANGHA. THEY MET MORE FREQUENTLY.

RUPINIKA'S MOTHER MAKARADANSHTRA, WAS A HEARTLESS, GREEDY OLD WOMAN. WHEN SHE LEARNED THAT HER DAUGHTER WAS IN LOVE WITH A POOR BRAHMIN YOUTH—

I DON'T APPROVE OF YOUR AFFECTION FOR THAT GOOD-FOR-NOTHING BRAHMIN.

LOHA-JANGHA IS A MAN OF LEARNING. I LOVE HIM WITH ALL MY HEART.

TRUE, YOU LOVE HIM. BUT HE HAS A CUNNING EYE ON YOUR MONEY.

MONEY! MONEY! IS THAT ALL THAT MATTERS TO YOU? A MAN'S CHARACTER AND NOBILITY—ARE THESE OF NO VALUE?

MARRY SUCH A PERSON AND HE'LL DESERT YOU AFTER DRAINING YOU OF ALL YOUR WEALTH!

I SWEAR THAT MY LOHAJANGHA CARES FOR ME.

THE GIRL IS FOOLISHLY IN LOVE. WE MUST GET RID OF THIS MAN.

MAKARADANSHTRA WENT TO ONE OF RUPINIKA'S ADMIRERS, A RICH, INFLUENTIAL MERCHANT.

THIS LOHAJANGHA IS A THORN IN MY FLESH.

SO YOU WANT HIM REMOVED ? THAT IS EASILY DONE. I HAVE FOUR HEFTY SERVANTS.

THIS EVENING I'LL SEND RUPINIKA TO THE TEMPLE EARLIER THAN USUAL. WHEN LOHAJANGHA COMES TO MY HOUSE, YOUR MEN CAN DEAL WITH HIM.

THAT EVENING THE VILLAINOUS MERCHANT AND HIS MEN LAY IN WAIT FOR LOHAJANGHA'S APPEARANCE.

RUPINIKA LEFT FOR THE TEMPLE.

IF LOHAJANGHA COMES, ASK HIM TO WAIT. I'LL BE BACK SOON.

I'LL KEEP HIM ENTERTAINED.

BUT REMEMBER, NOT TOO MUCH OF FRIENDLINESS!

UNAWARE OF THE VILE PLAN OF MAKARADANSHTRA, LOHAJANGHA ENTERED HIS BELOVED'S HOUSE.

THE MOUSE HAS WALKED INTO THE TRAP. CLOSE IN ON HIM!

THE MERCHANT AND HIS MEN POUNCED UPON LOHAJANGHA...

... AND BEAT HIM UP MERCILESSLY.

THEY CARRIED LOHAJANGHA'S BRUISED BODY AND THREW IT INTO A DITCH.

NOW LIE HERE, YOU FOOL. YOUR PLACE IS NOT BY RUPINIKA'S SIDE BUT HERE, IN THIS DITCH.

WHEN RUPINIKA RETURNED SHE HEARD FROM HER FRIEND LATA ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED IN HER ABSENCE. SHE WAS OVERWHELMED WITH GRIEF.

POOR LOHAJANGHA! WHY SHOULD MOTHER HAVE BEEN SO WICKED?

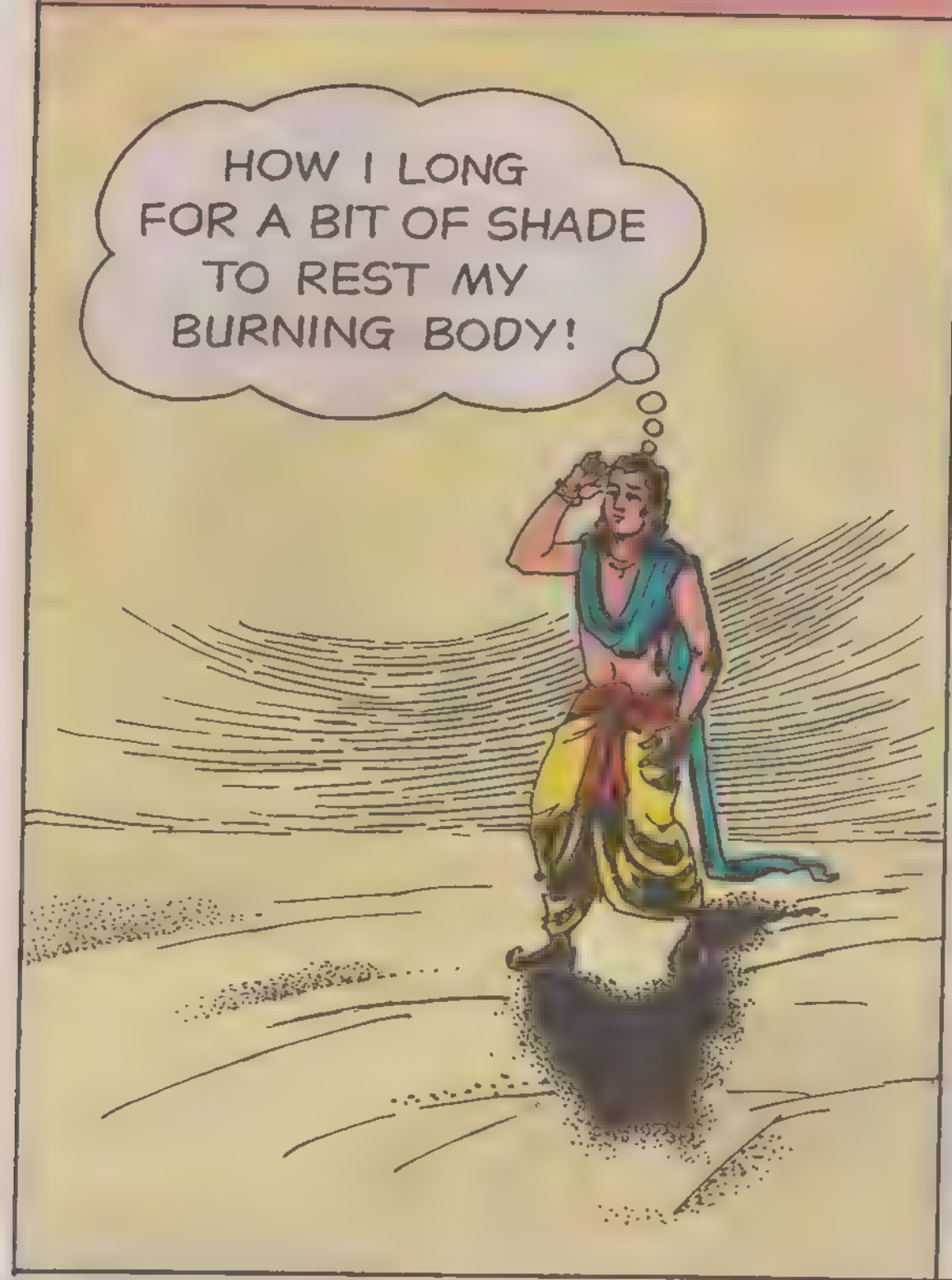
LOHAJANGHA SOMEHOW EXTRICATED HIS ACHING BODY FROM THE DITCH.

OH! MY HEAD AND BACK! IT'S ALL THAT GREEDY OLD WOMAN'S DOING. I'LL GET EVEN WITH HER ONE DAY.

HE WASHED HIMSELF AT HIS HOUSE AND CHANGED HIS TORN, STAINED CLOTHES.

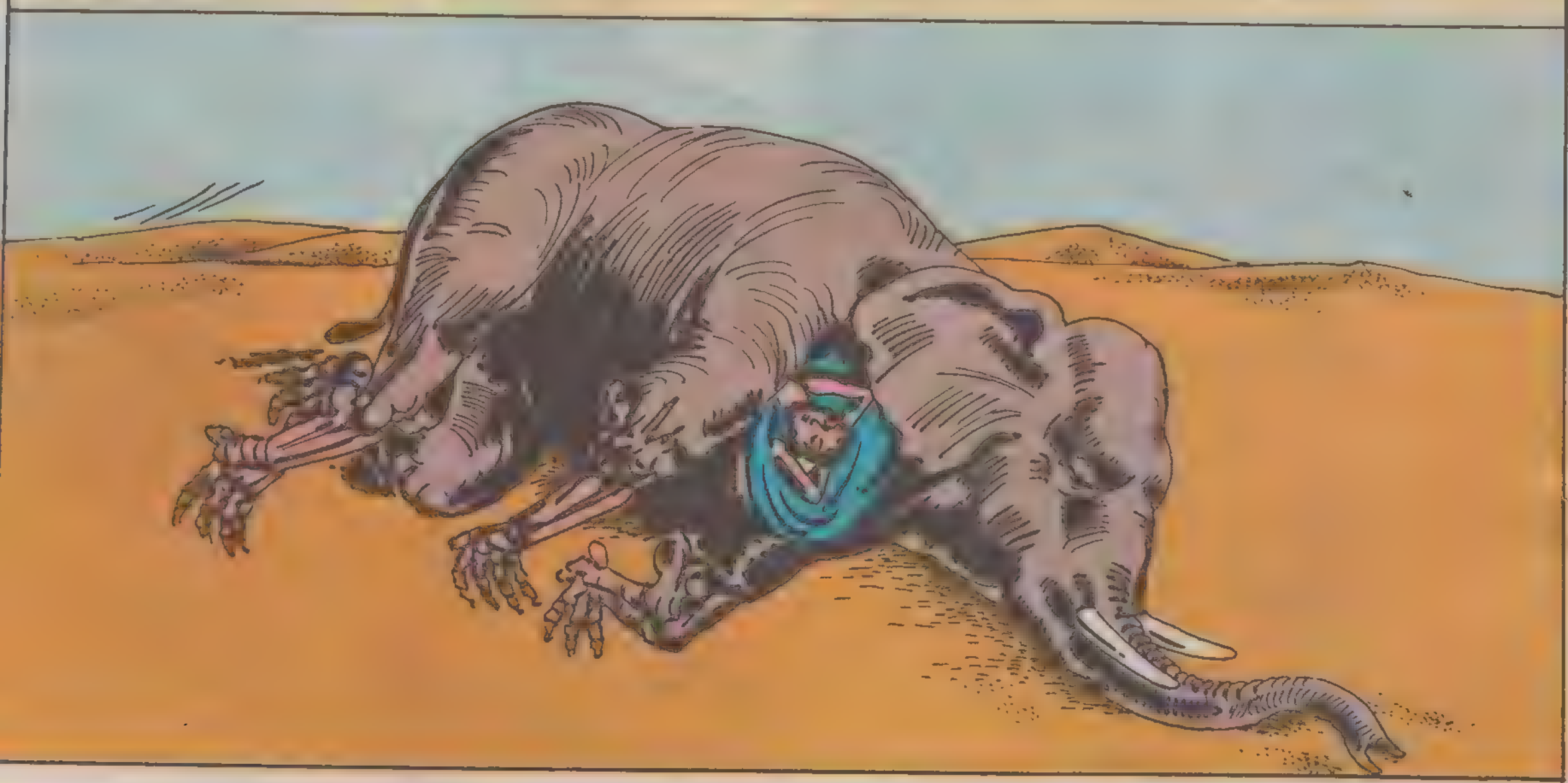
I DO NOT WISH TO STAY IN MATHURA NOW.

HE TRAVELLED MANY MILES, AWAY FROM MATHURA. IN THE HEAT OF THE SUN, HE FELT EXHAUSTED. THE LANDSCAPE WAS DESERTED, TREELESS.



HE CAME UPON THE CARCASS OF AN ELEPHANT, SCOOPED CLEAN OF ALL ITS FLESH BY PREYING JACKALS.

HE MADE HIS WAY INTO THE CARCASS AND SOON FELL ASLEEP.



AT NIGHT, THE DARK CLOUDS IN THE SKY SENT A HEAVY DOWN-POUR.

THE CLOUDBURST MADE THE CARCASS CONTRACT, AND LOHAJANGHA, LOST IN SLEEP, WAS SEALED UP WITHIN. THE TORRENTIAL RAIN SWEPT THE CARCASS RIGHT INTO THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER UNTIL...

...IT EVENTUALLY FLOATED INTO THE SEA.

AN ENORMOUS EAGLE PICKED IT UP IN ITS GIANT TALONS AND CARRIED IT TO THE ISLAND OF LANKA, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SEA.

DEPOSITING THE CARCASS ON THE SHORE, THE EAGLE TORE IT OPEN WITH ITS SHARP BEAK AND TALONS. ON DISCOVERING THAT THERE WAS A MAN INSIDE, IT PANICKED AND MADE OFF INTO THE SKIES.

LOHAJANGHA WOKE UP AND CAME OUT THROUGH THE LARGE RENT MADE BY THE EAGLE.

I AM NOW ON AN ISLAND ACROSS THE SEA. HOW STRANGE!

AS HE WAS WONDERING WHAT TO DO, HE CAUGHT SIGHT OF A PAIR OF RAKSHASAS.*

THEY ARE RUNNING AWAY FROM ME! I WONDER WHY!

NOW, EVER SINCE LORD RAMA HAD DEFEATED RAVANA, THE DEMON KING OF LANKA, ALL THE RAKSHASAS OF THE ISLAND WERE SCARED OF HUMANS. SO THE PAIR WHO HAD SPOTTED LOHAJANGHA IMMEDIATELY RAN TO THEIR KING, VIBHISHANA.

WE HAVE SEEN A HUMAN BEING ON THE SHORE!

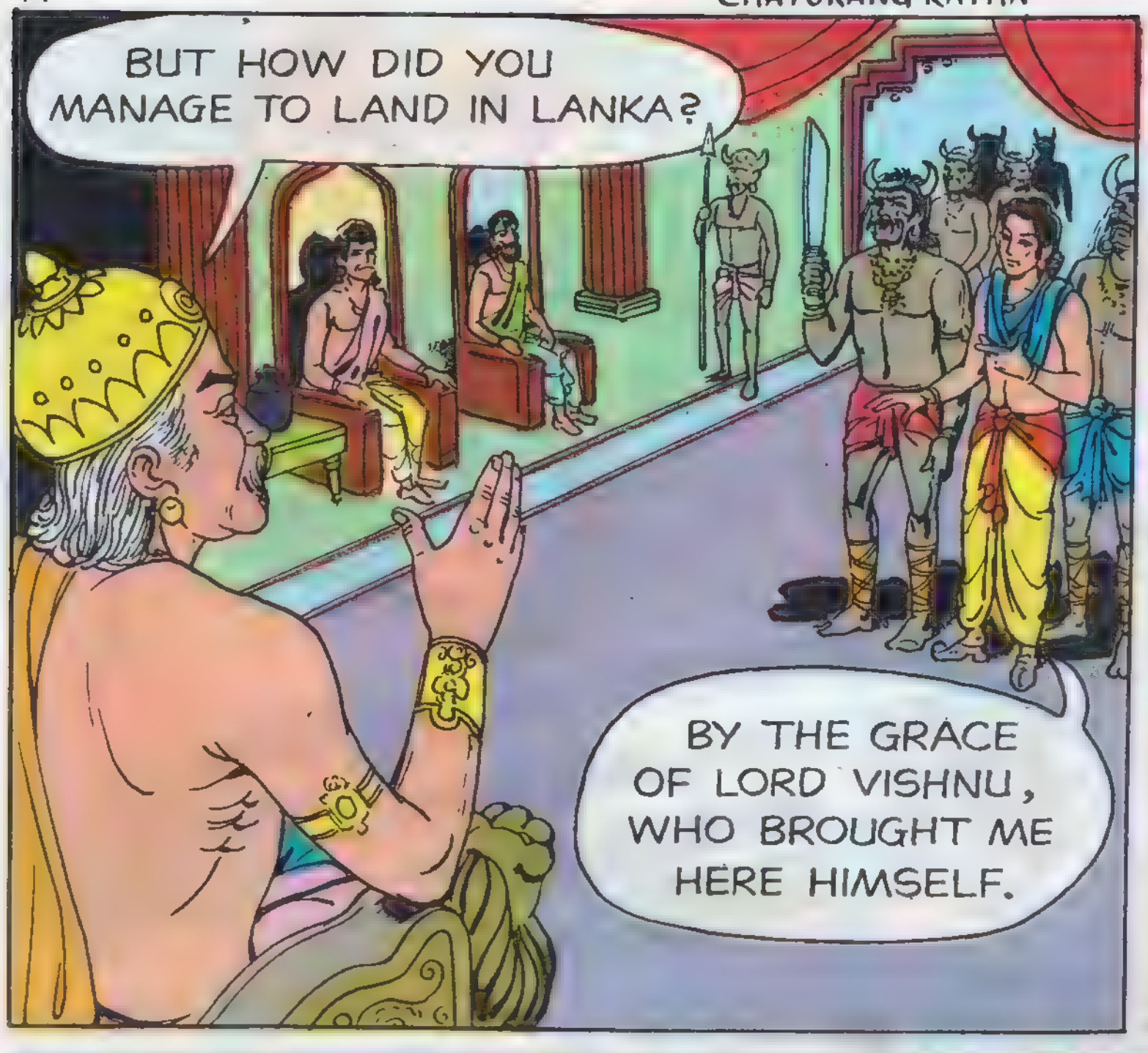
HOW DID HE GET TO LANKA? ESCORT HIM RESPECTFULLY AND BRING HIM TO ME.

AT KING VIBHISHANA'S COURT_

HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO CROSS THE GREAT SEA?

LOHAJANGHA DECIDED TO USE HIS WITS AND IMAGINATION.

I WENT THROUGH A PROLONGED RELIGIOUS PENANCE AND WON THE FAVOUR OF LORD VISHNU. THE MIGHTY GOD APPEARED TO ME IN A DREAM AND BADE ME GO TO LANKA WHERE KING VIBHISHANA WOULD GIVE ME AS MUCH WEALTH AS I DESIRED.

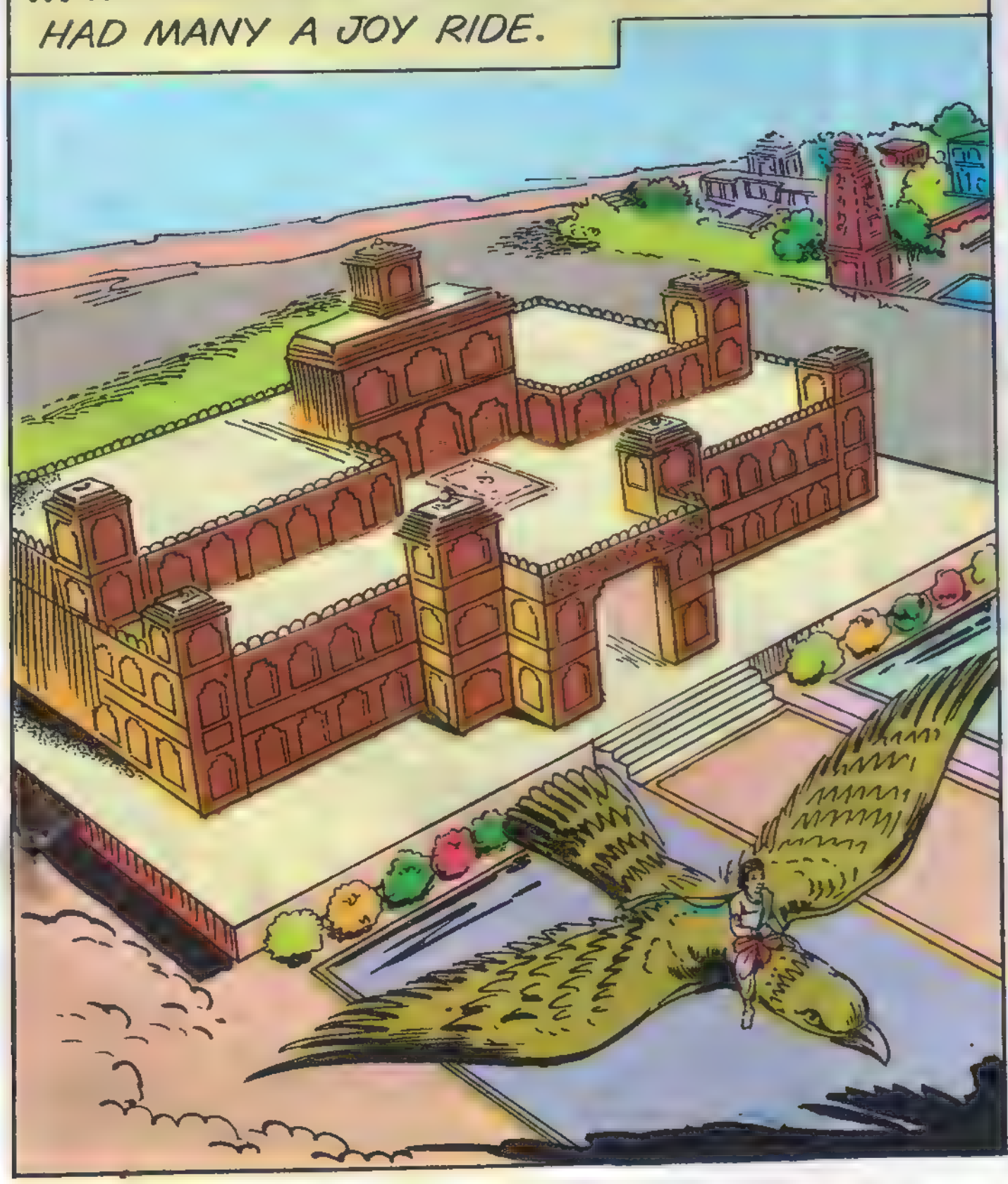

BUT HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO LAND IN LANKA?
BY THE GRACE OF LORD VISHNU, WHO BROUGHT ME HERE HIMSELF.

WONDERFUL ARE THE WAYS OF LORD VISHNU... GLORY BE TO HIM!

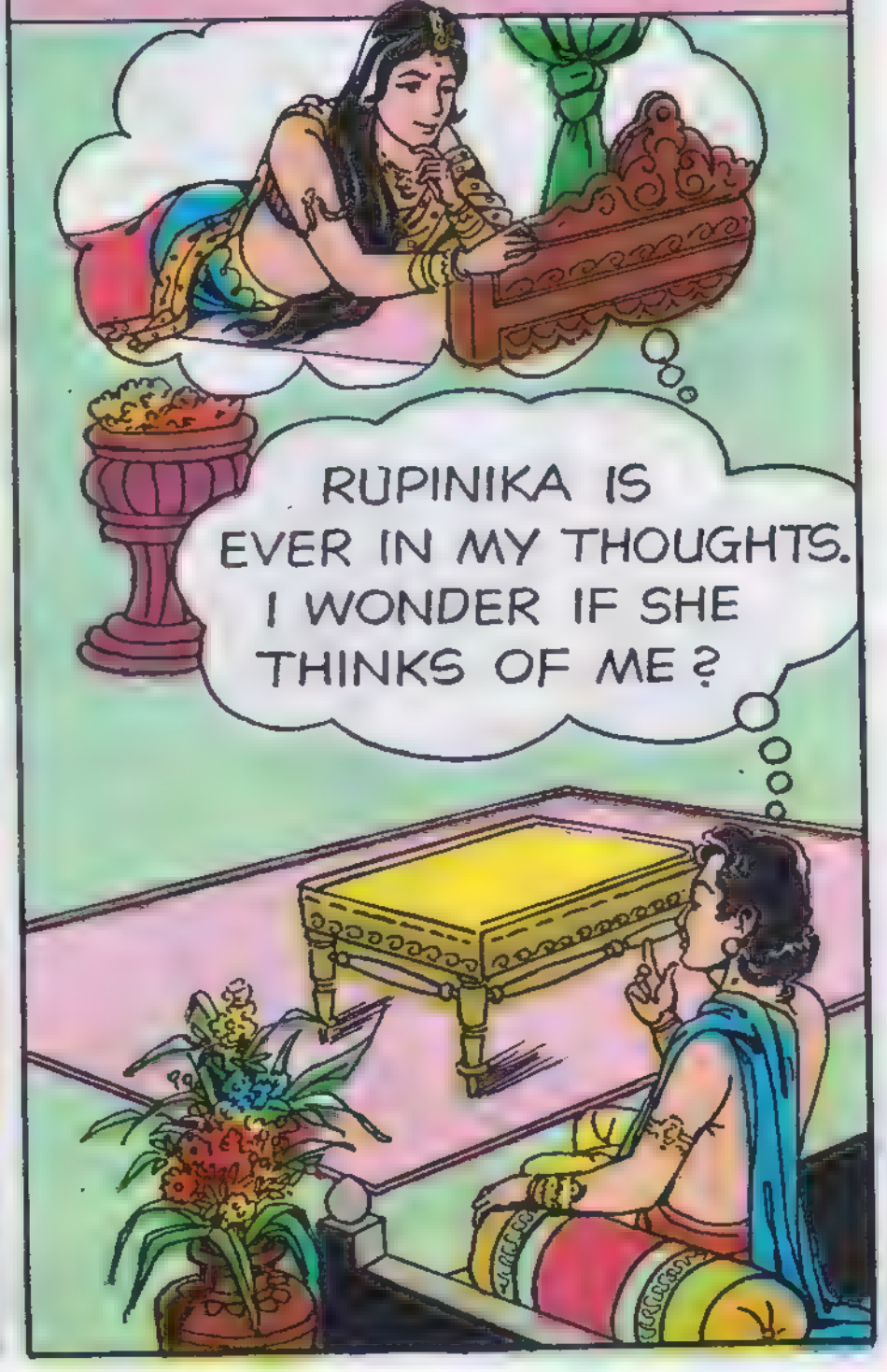
KING VIBHISHANA BELIEVED THE STORY, SINCE THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY OF ACCOUNTING FOR THE YOUNG MAN'S PRESENCE ON THE ISLAND.
SIR, YOU WILL BE AN HONOURED GUEST AT MY PALACE, FOR AS LONG AS YOU WISH.

LOHAJANGHA, THE POOR BRAHMIN, LIVED IN VIBHISHANA'S PALACE LIKE A PRINCE OF THE LAND. VIBHISHANA'S SOLDIERS CAPTURED A YOUNG EAGLE AND DOMESTICATED HIM...

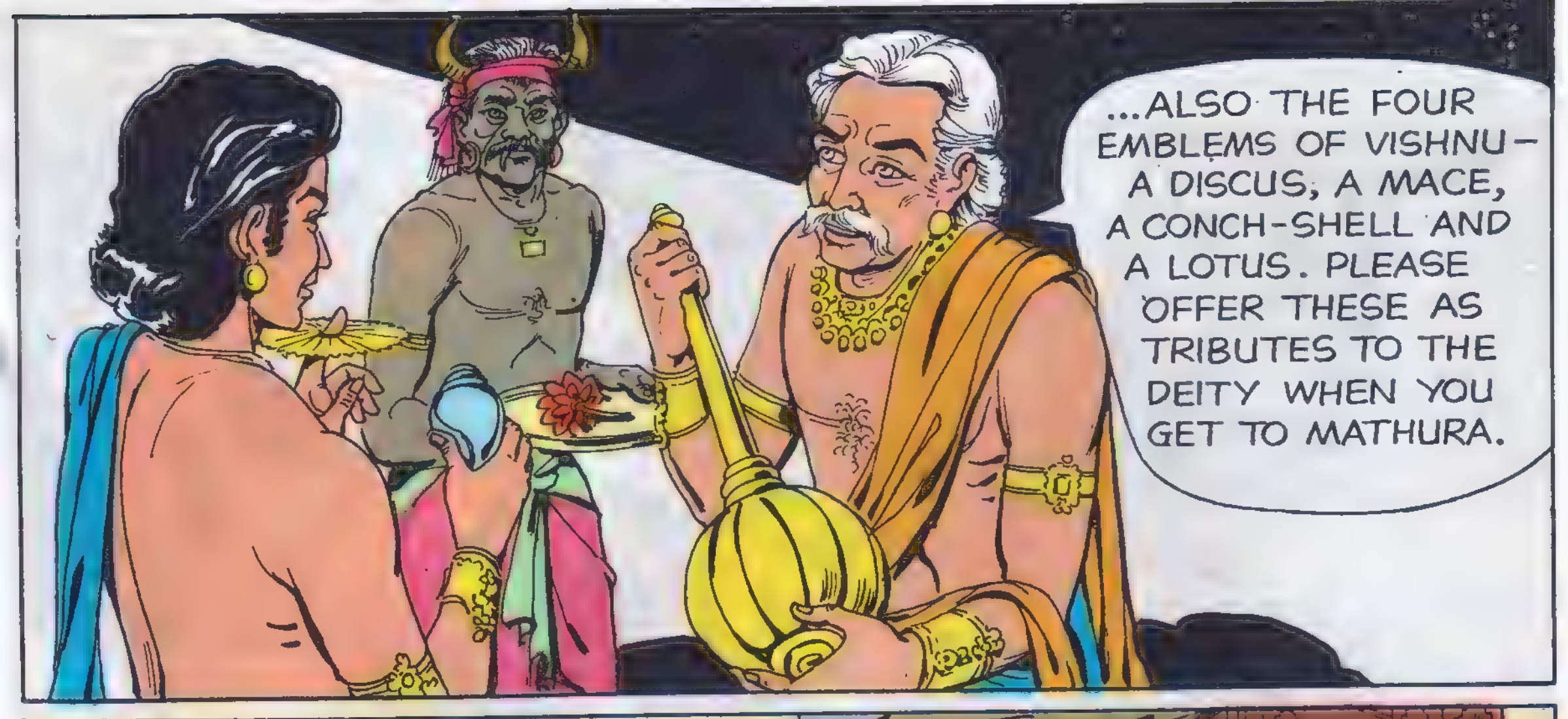
...SITTING ON WHOSE BACK, LOHAJANGHA HAD MANY A JOY RIDE.

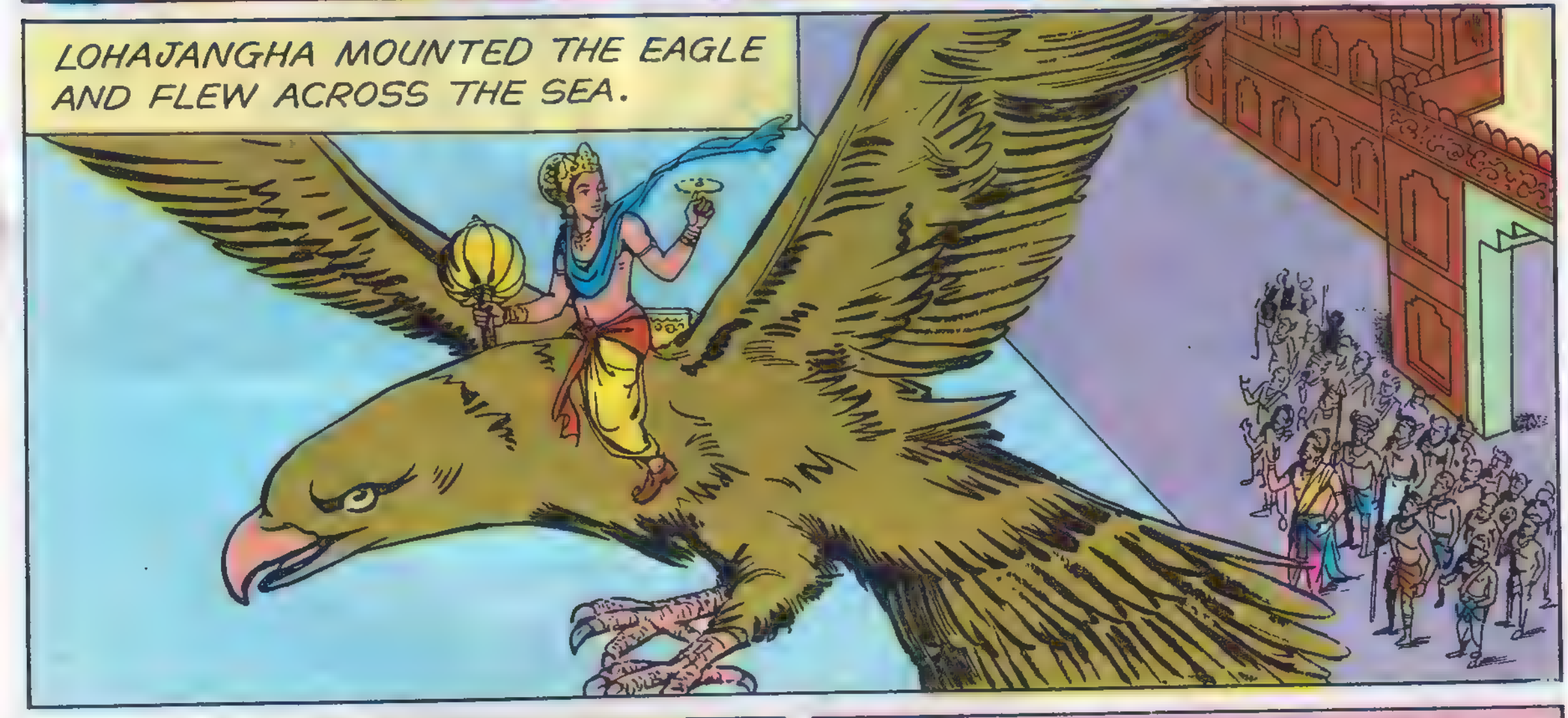


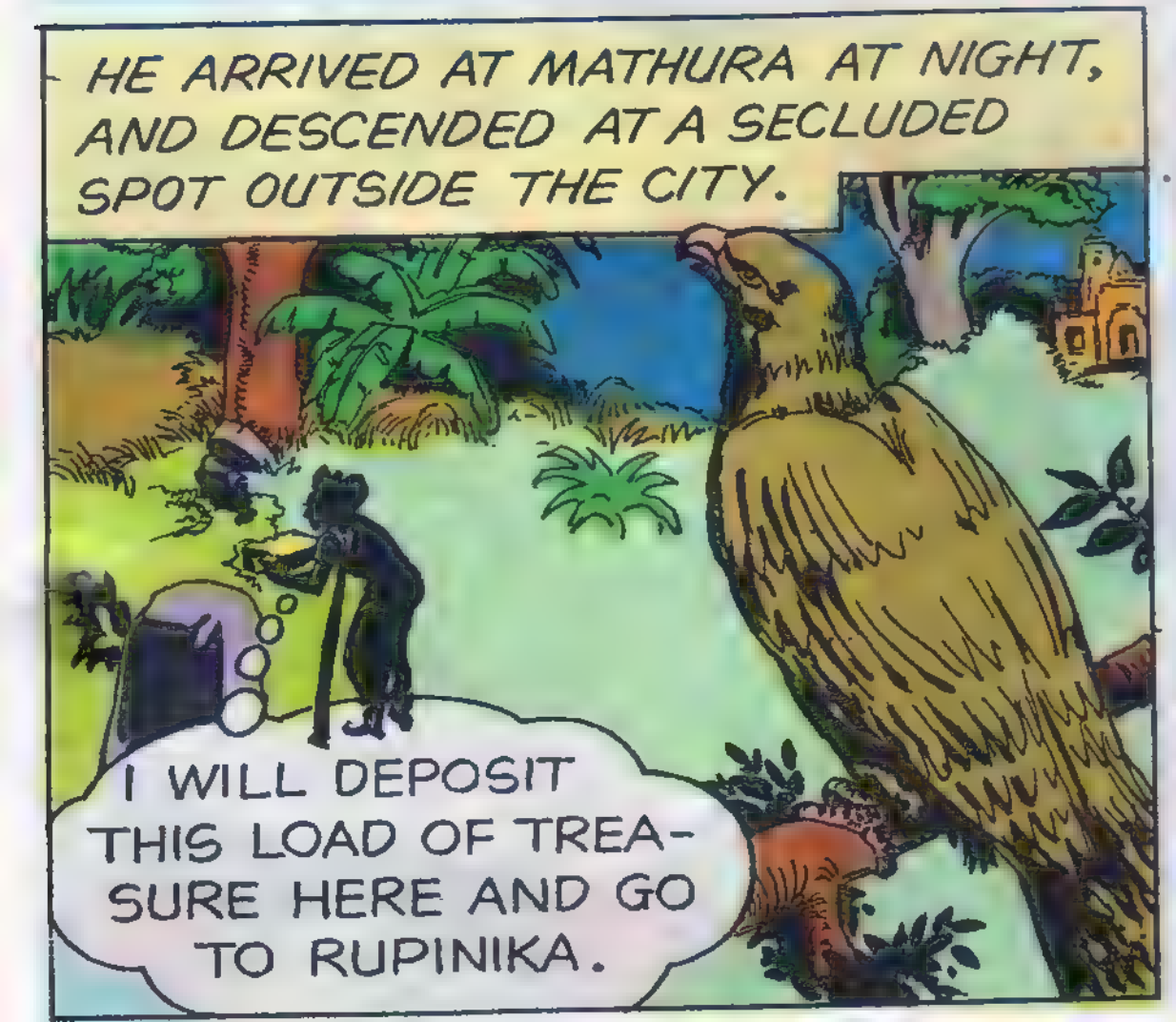
THOUGH LOHAJANGHA WAS IN LANKA, HIS THOUGHTS WERE FULL OF MATHURA AND RUPINIKA.

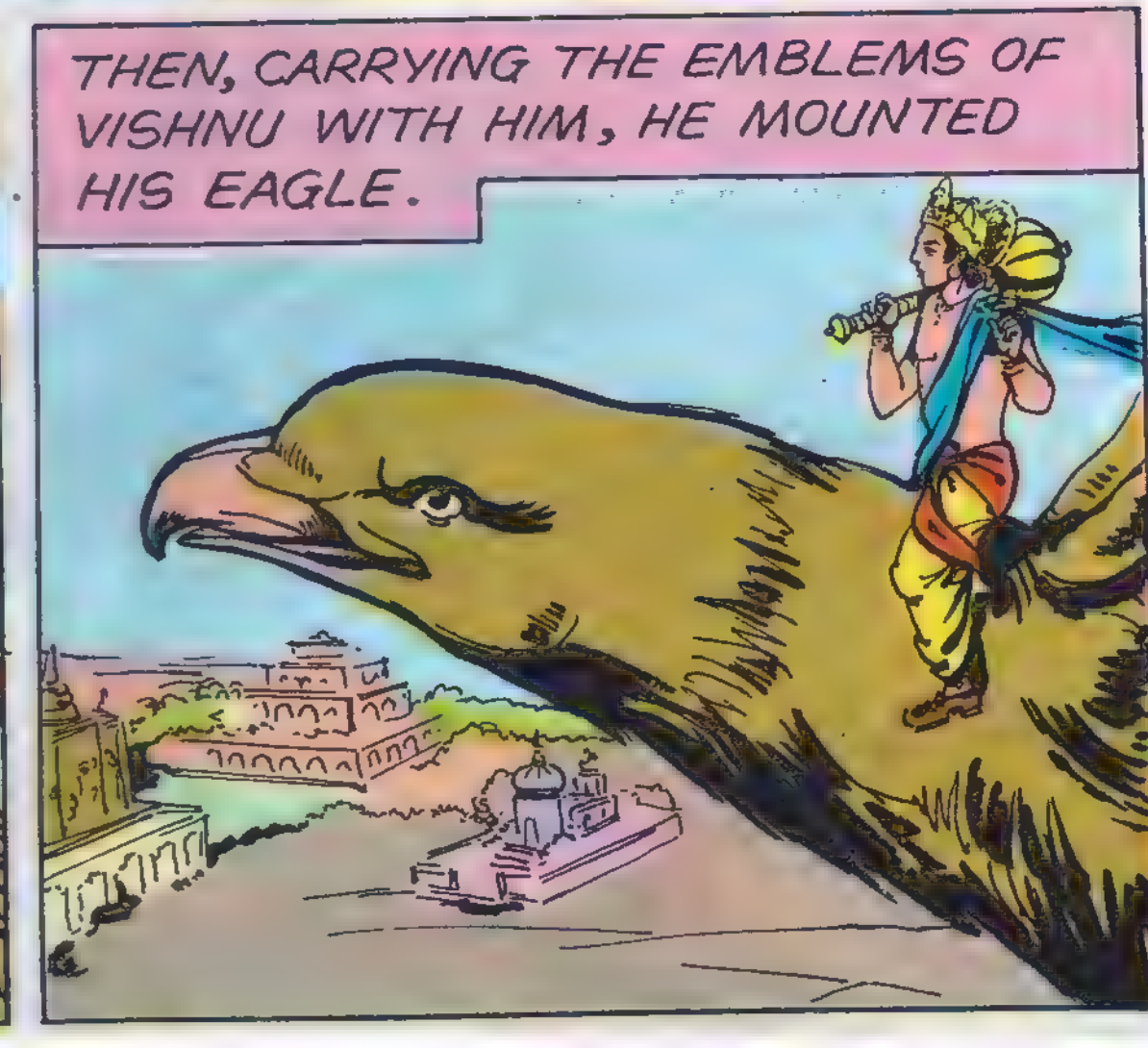


HE APPROACHED KING VIBHISHANA –
SIRE, YOUR HOSPITALITY IS OVERWHELMING. BUT I MISS MATHURA.
I UNDERSTAND, FRIEND. YOU LONG TO RETURN HOME.
IF YOU WOULD PERMIT IT.
I GIVE YOU THESE PRESENTS OF GOLD AND DIAMONDS AND...


...ALSO THE FOUR EMBLEMS OF VISHNU– A DISCUS, A MACE, A CONCH-SHELL AND A LOTUS. PLEASE OFFER THESE AS TRIBUTES TO THE DEITY WHEN YOU GET TO MATHURA.


LOHAJANGHA MOUNTED THE EAGLE AND FLEW ACROSS THE SEA.


HE ARRIVED AT MATHURA AT NIGHT, AND DESCENDED AT A SECLUDED SPOT OUTSIDE THE CITY.
I WILL DEPOSIT THIS LOAD OF TREASURE HERE AND GO TO RUPINIKA.


THEN, CARRYING THE EMBLEMS OF VISHNU WITH HIM, HE MOUNTED HIS EAGLE.

HOVERING ABOVE RUPINIKA'S HOUSE, HE LET OUT A SOFT WHISTLE TO ATTRACT HER ATTENTION...

...AND DESCENDED GENTLY ON THE TERRACE OF HER HOUSE.

KNOW YOU NO ME? I AM LORD NARA-YANA*. THE FAME OF YOUR LOVELINESS HAS REACHED ME AND I HAVE COME TO SEE YOU.

* ANOTHER NAME FOR VISHNU.

RUPINIKA WAS OVER-AWED AND CONDUCTED HIM INTO HER CHAMBER.

IN THE MORNING RUPINIKA'S MANNER WAS ALOOF AND RESERVED.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU, RUPINIKA? YOU ARE SO SILENT.

LAST NIGHT, I BECAME THE WIFE OF THE GREAT VISHNU HIMSELF; AND I MUST NOT CONVERSE WITH ORDINARY PERSONS.

HAS YOUR HEAD TURNED, GIRL? I'LL SEND FOR THE FAMILY PRIEST TOMORROW.

BUT THAT VERY NIGHT MAKARADANSHTRA SAW A BIG EAGLE DESCEND ON THE TERRACE OF HER HOUSE, AND A MAN BEARING THE FOUR EMBLEMS OF VISHNU, DISMOUNT.

WHAT! ISN'T THAT THE LORD VISHNU HIMSELF? RUPINIKA SPOKE THE TRUTH!

THE GREEDY MAKARADANSHTRA STARTED THINKING...

WHAT A STROKE OF LUCK TO HAVE VISHNU FOR A SON-IN-LAW! I MUST GET ALL THAT I CAN FROM HIM.

MAKARADANSHTRA BEGAN TO FLATTER HER DAUGHTER FROM THE VERY NEXT DAY.

I DID SEE THE LORD VISHNU GO TO YOU LAST NIGHT. WELL DONE, MY DAUGHTER! I AM PROUD OF YOU.

RUPINIKA GUESSED THAT HER MOTHER HAD SOME PLAN IN HER AVARICIOUS HEAD.

MY BELOVED DAUGHTER, CAN YOU ASK YOUR HUSBAND A FAVOUR FOR ME?

WHY NOT, MOTHER?

PLEASE ASK MY DIVINE SON-IN-LAW TO TAKE ME TO VAIKUNTH.*

IS THAT NOT ASKING TOO MUCH EVEN IF LORD VISHNU IS YOUR SON-IN-LAW? BUT FOR YOU, SWEET MOTHER, I'LL SPEAK TO HIM.

THAT NIGHT_

MY LORD, I HAVE A REQUEST.

NAME IT WITHOUT FEAR.

MY MOTHER WISHES TO GO WITH YOU TO VAIKUNTH.

YOUR MOTHER? PARADISE IS NO PLACE FOR A SINNER LIKE HER!

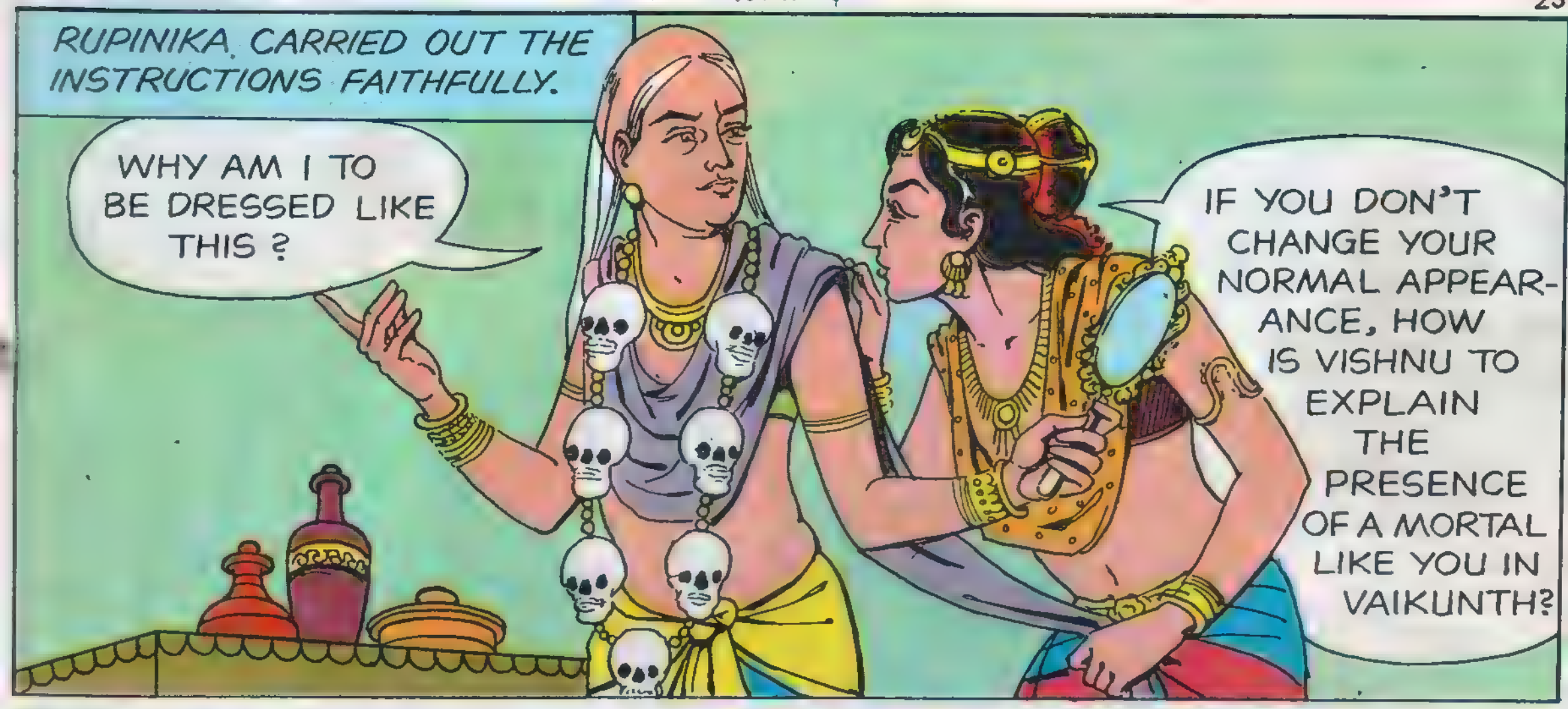
PLEASE, LORD, FOR MY SAKE!

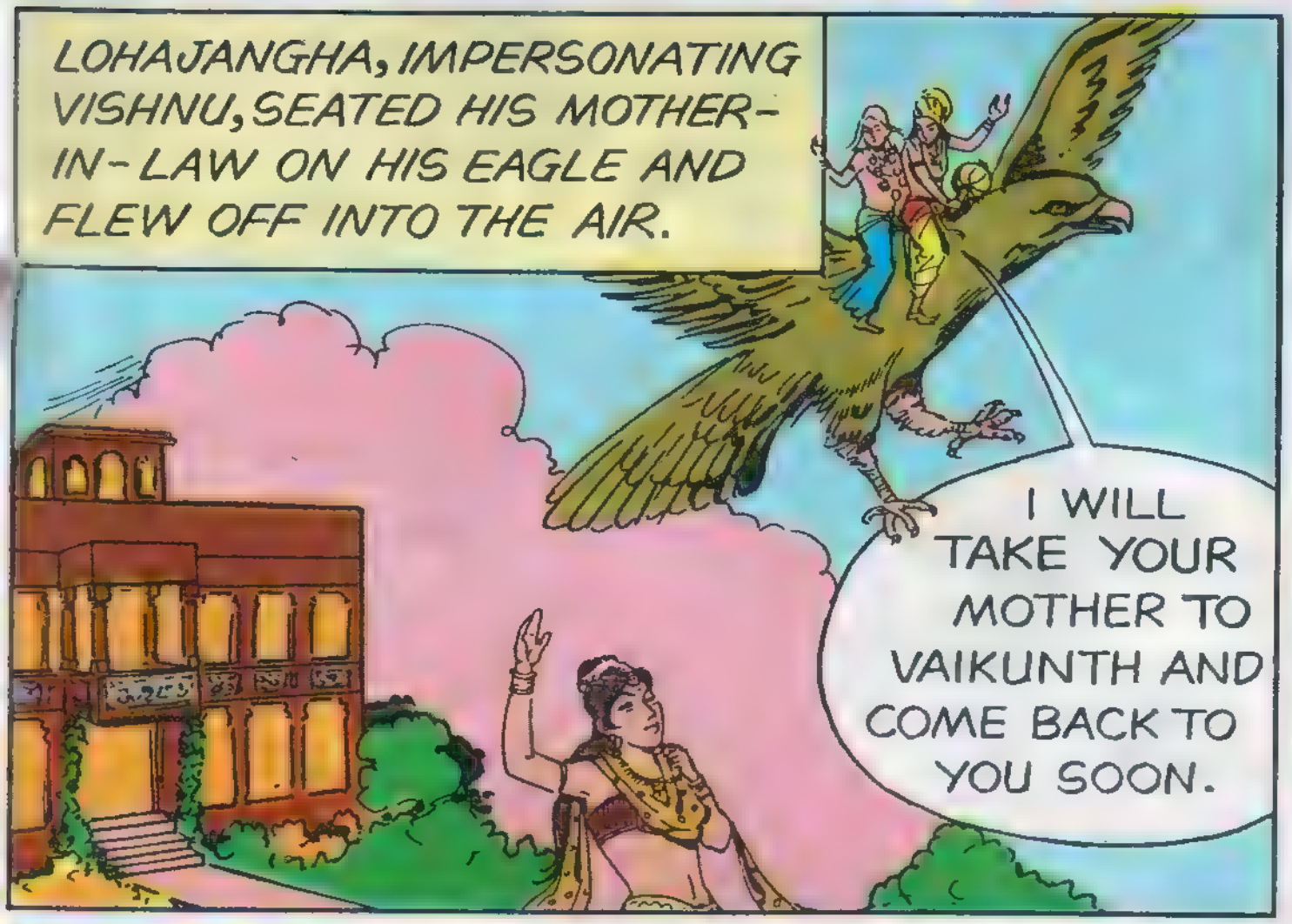
IF SHE HAD NOT BEEN THE GREEDY, GRASPING CREATURE THAT SHE IS, TURNING YOU INTO A TEMPLE DANCER FOR MONEY, PERHAPS...

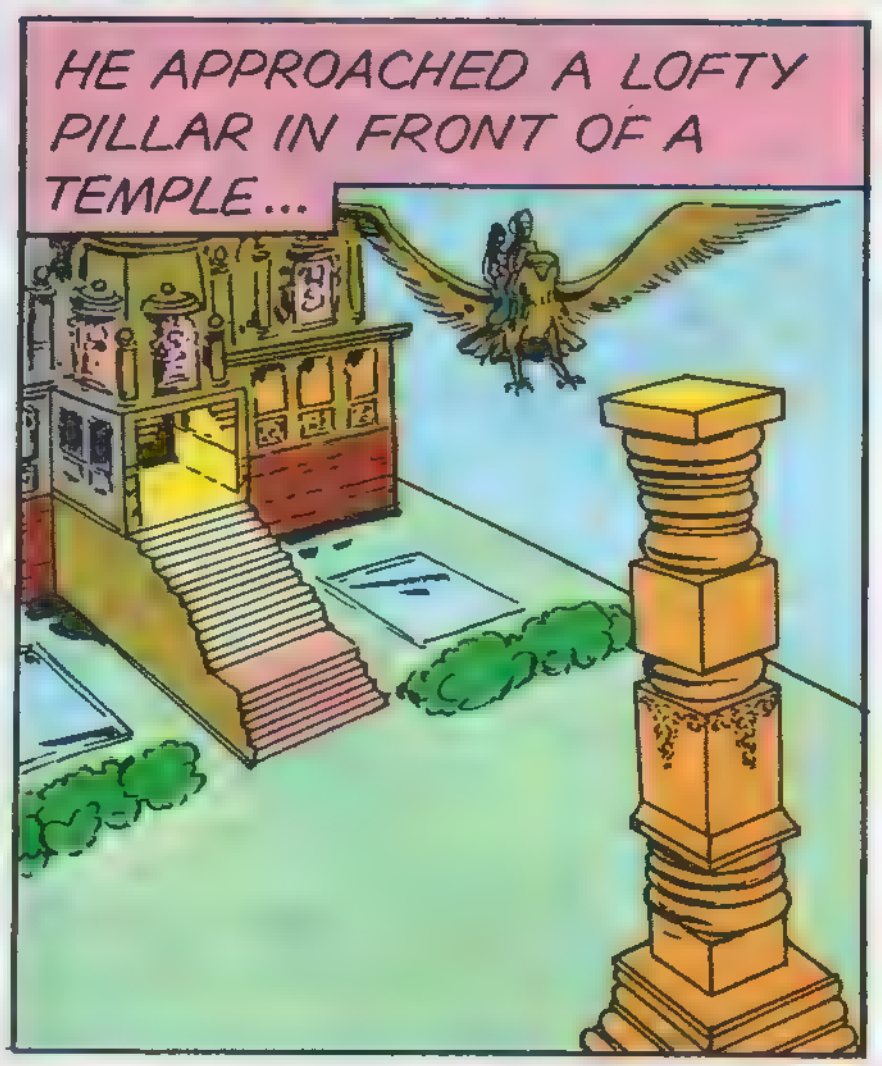
MY LORD, NOTHING IS A SECRET FROM YOU. BUT YOU ALSO KNOW WITH WHAT SINCERE DEVOTION I DANCED AND PRAYED IN YOUR TEMPLE. PARDON MY MOTHER AND FULFIL HER WISH.

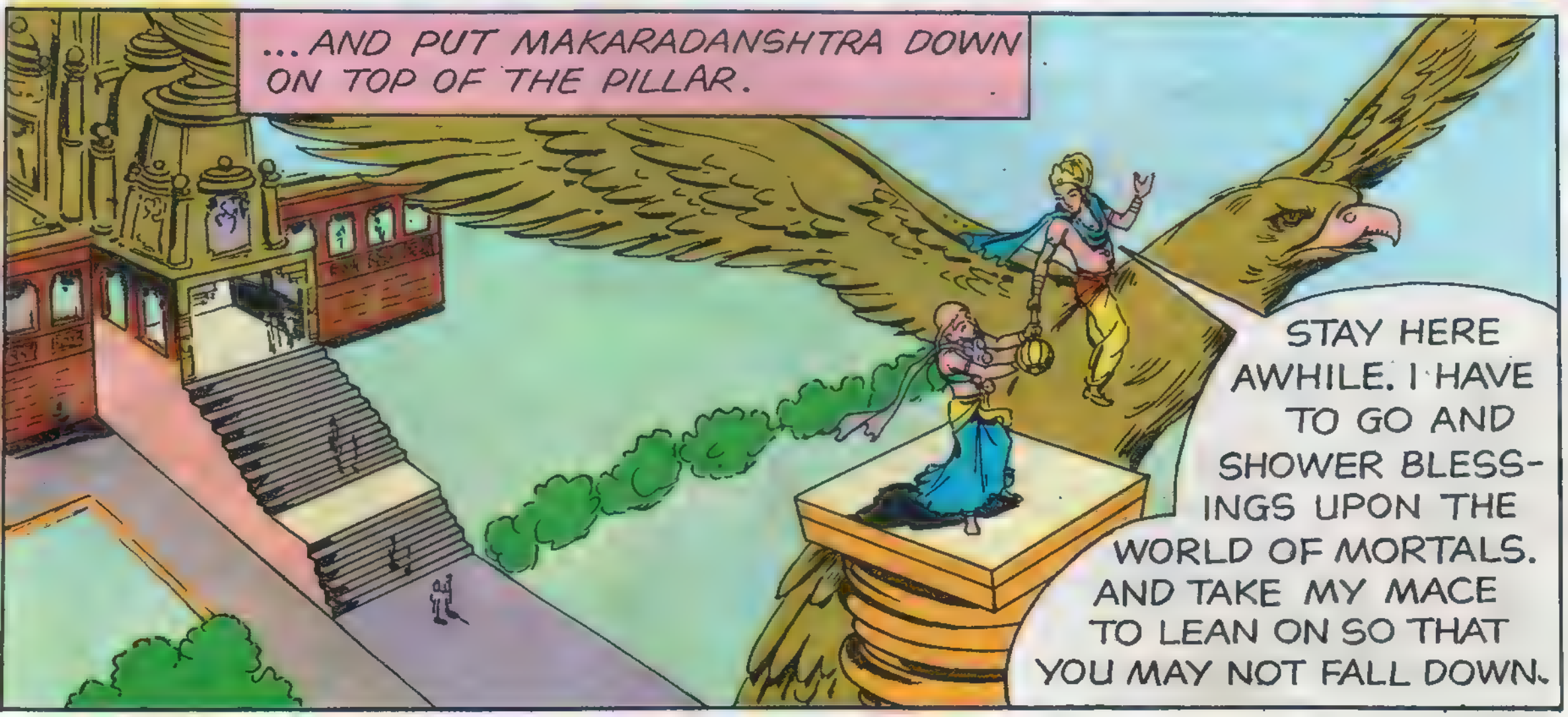
HERE'S MY CHANCE TO TEACH THE GREEDY CRONE A LESSON!

ONLY ON CERTAIN CONDITIONS CAN SHE GAIN ADMITTANCE TO VAIKUNTH. HER HEAD HAS TO BE SHAVEN, LEAVING ONLY FIVE TUFTS OF HAIR, HER BODY PAINTED HALF RED, HALF BLACK. SHE MUST ALSO WEAR A NECKLACE OF SKULLS. IN THIS GUISE, I CAN MANAGE TO LEAD HER TO PARADISE.

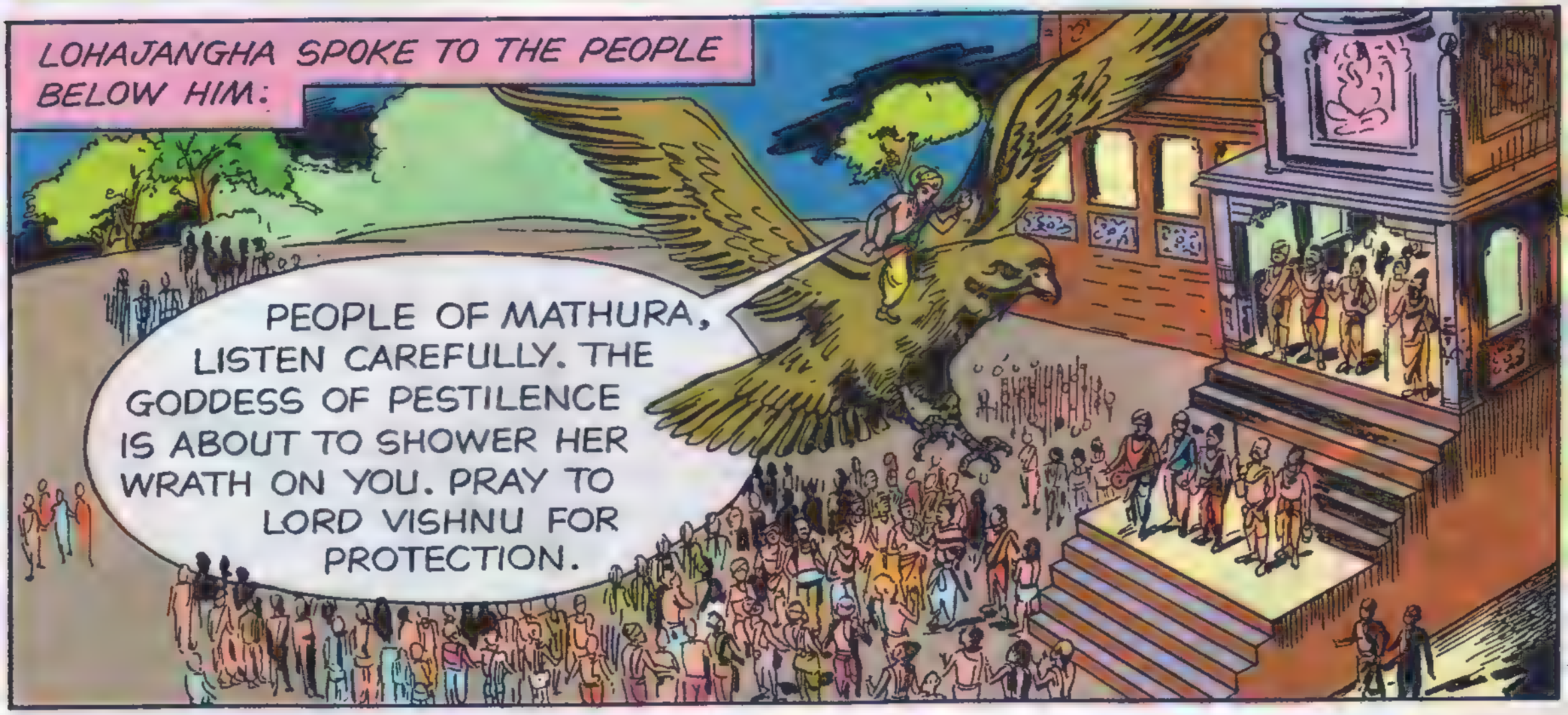

RUPINIKA CARRIED OUT THE INSTRUCTIONS FAITHFULLY.
WHY AM I TO BE DRESSED LIKE THIS ?
IF YOU DON'T CHANGE YOUR NORMAL APPEARANCE, HOW IS VISHNU TO EXPLAIN THE PRESENCE OF A MORTAL LIKE YOU IN VAIKUNTH?


LOHAJANGHA, IMPERSONATING VISHNU, SEATED HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW ON HIS EAGLE AND FLEW OFF INTO THE AIR.
I WILL TAKE YOUR MOTHER TO VAIKUNTH AND COME BACK TO YOU SOON.


HE APPROACHED A LOFTY PILLAR IN FRONT OF A TEMPLE...


...AND PUT MAKARADANSHTRA DOWN ON TOP OF THE PILLAR.
STAY HERE AWHILE. I HAVE TO GO AND SHOWER BLESSINGS UPON THE WORLD OF MORTALS. AND TAKE MY MACE TO LEAN ON SO THAT YOU MAY NOT FALL DOWN.

AFTER A FEW HOURS A RELIGIOUS PROCESSION BROUGHT A HUGE CROWD TO THE TEMPLE.


LOHAJANGHA SPOKE TO THE PEOPLE BELOW HIM:
PEOPLE OF MATHURA, LISTEN CAREFULLY. THE GODDESS OF PESTILENCE IS ABOUT TO SHOWER HER WRATH ON YOU. PRAY TO LORD VISHNU FOR PROTECTION.

THE PEOPLE WERE FULL OF FEAR.
WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO DESERVE THIS ? ALL OF US HAVE BEEN HONEST AND GOD-FEARING.
THERE MUST BE A SINNER AMONGST US.

SOON THE ENTIRE CROWD STARTED PRAYING TO LORD VISHNU.
HELP US! PROTECT US! SAVE US!

MAKARADANSHTRA BALANCED PRECARIOUSLY ON THE PILLAR.

OOH! WHAT A HEIGHT! A FALL BELOW AND MY OLD BONES WILL NOT BE FOUND. VISHNU, VISHNU, WHERE ARE YOU? WHY HAVEN'T YOU RETURNED TO TAKE ME TO VAIKUNTH?

SHE LOST HER BALANCE AND CRIED OUT IN FEAR.

SAVE ME, I AM FALLING!

THE PEOPLE BELOW, ON HEARING THESE WORDS, BEGAN TO WONDER.

WHO SHRIEKS FROM UP THERE?

THE GODDESS OF PESTILENCE, WHO ELSE?

IN FEAR THEY ONCE AGAIN STARTED PRAYING.

SAVE ME, I AM FALLING!

THE PEOPLE SPENT THE NIGHT IN FEAR AND ANXIETY.

OH, LORD! SAVE US FROM THIS MISERY.

I SHALL DISTRIBUTE A BAG OF GRAIN TO THE POOR, BUT PLEASE SHIFT THIS GODDESS OF PESTILENCE AWAY FROM OUR BELOVED MATHURA.

IN THE MORNING_

THAT IS MAKARADANSHTRA UP THERE!

WHAT IS SHE DOING IN THIS GUISE?

SAVE ME, PLEASE.

THE ENTIRE POPULACE COLLECTED NEAR THE TEMPLE AND BEGAN TO TAUNT THE INFAMOUS MAKARADANSHTRA.

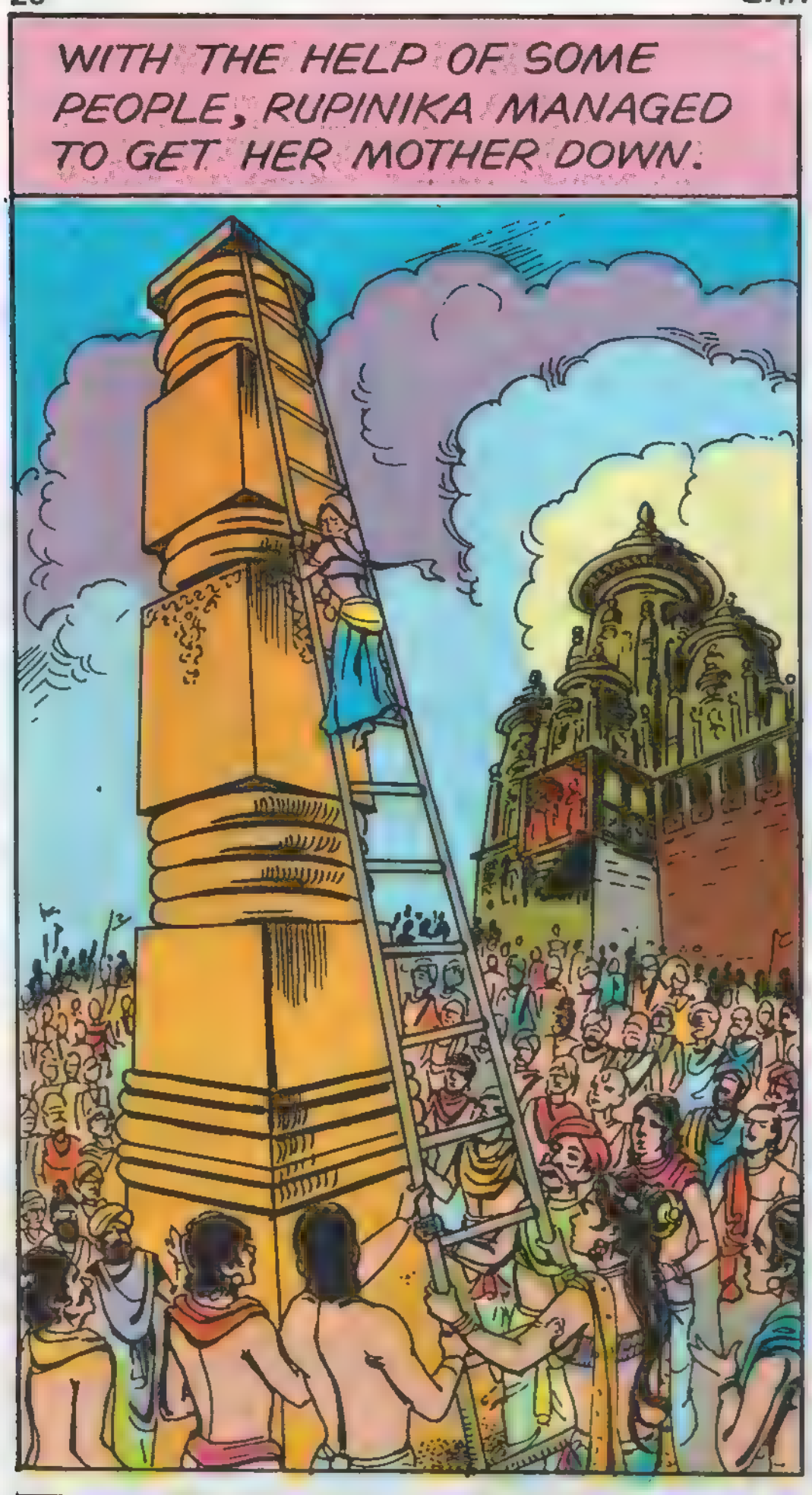
THAT SERVES HER RIGHT.

YOU ARE IN THE RIGHT PLACE NOW.

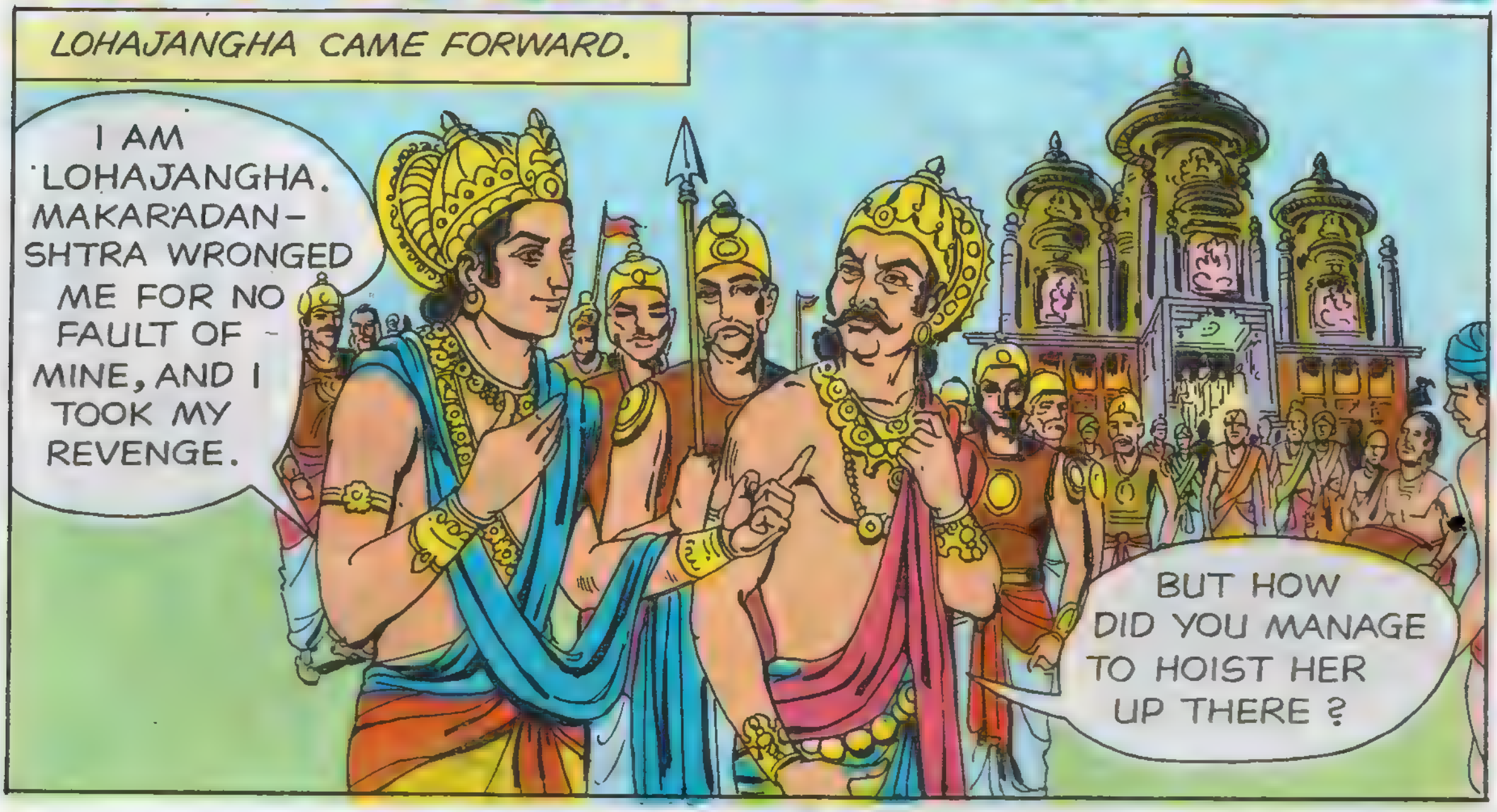
THE PEOPLE SUMMONED THE KING WHO ARRIVED ONLY TO JOIN IN THEIR LAUGHTER AND MIRTH.

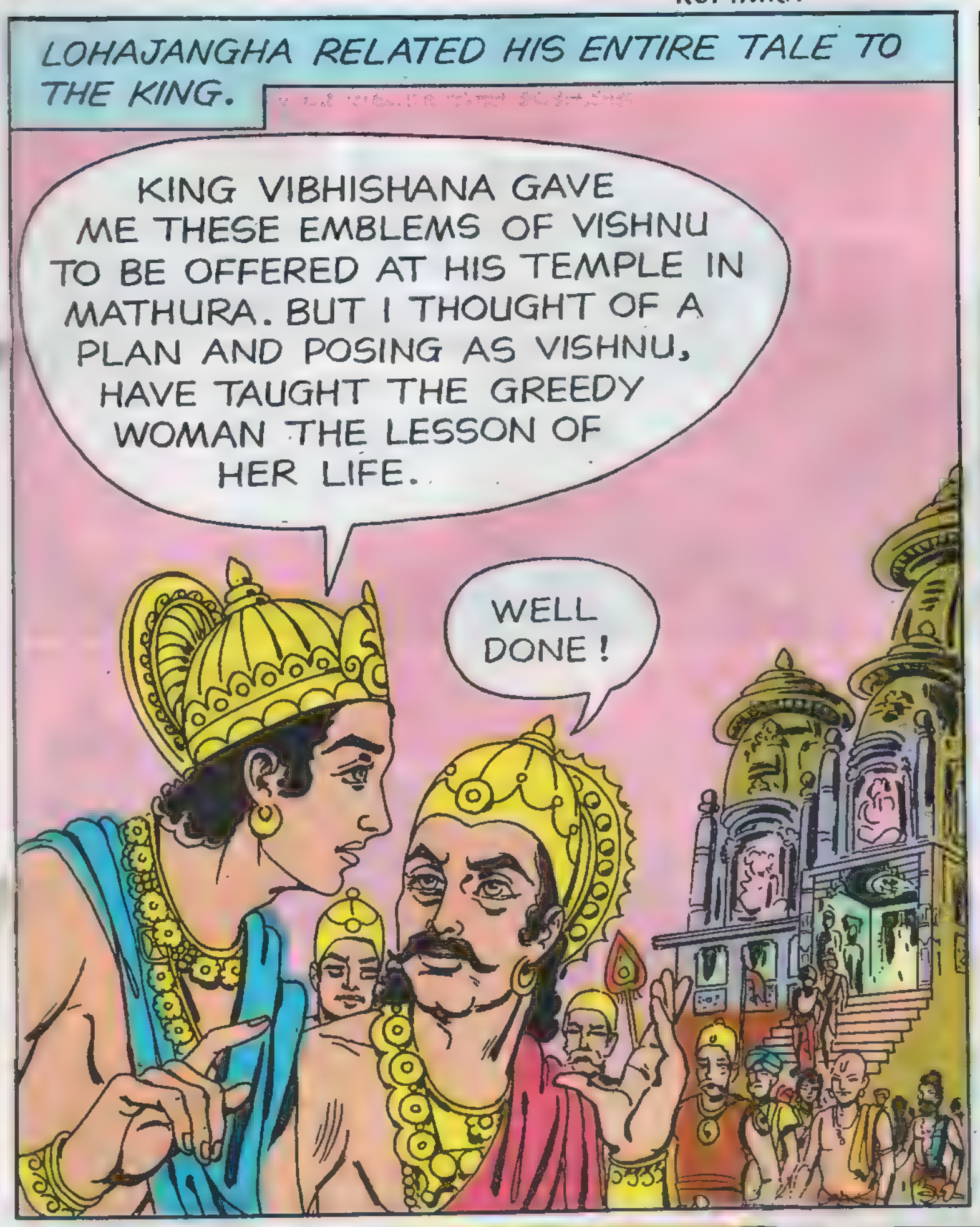
WORD REACHED RUPINIKA AND SHE TOO ARRIVED.

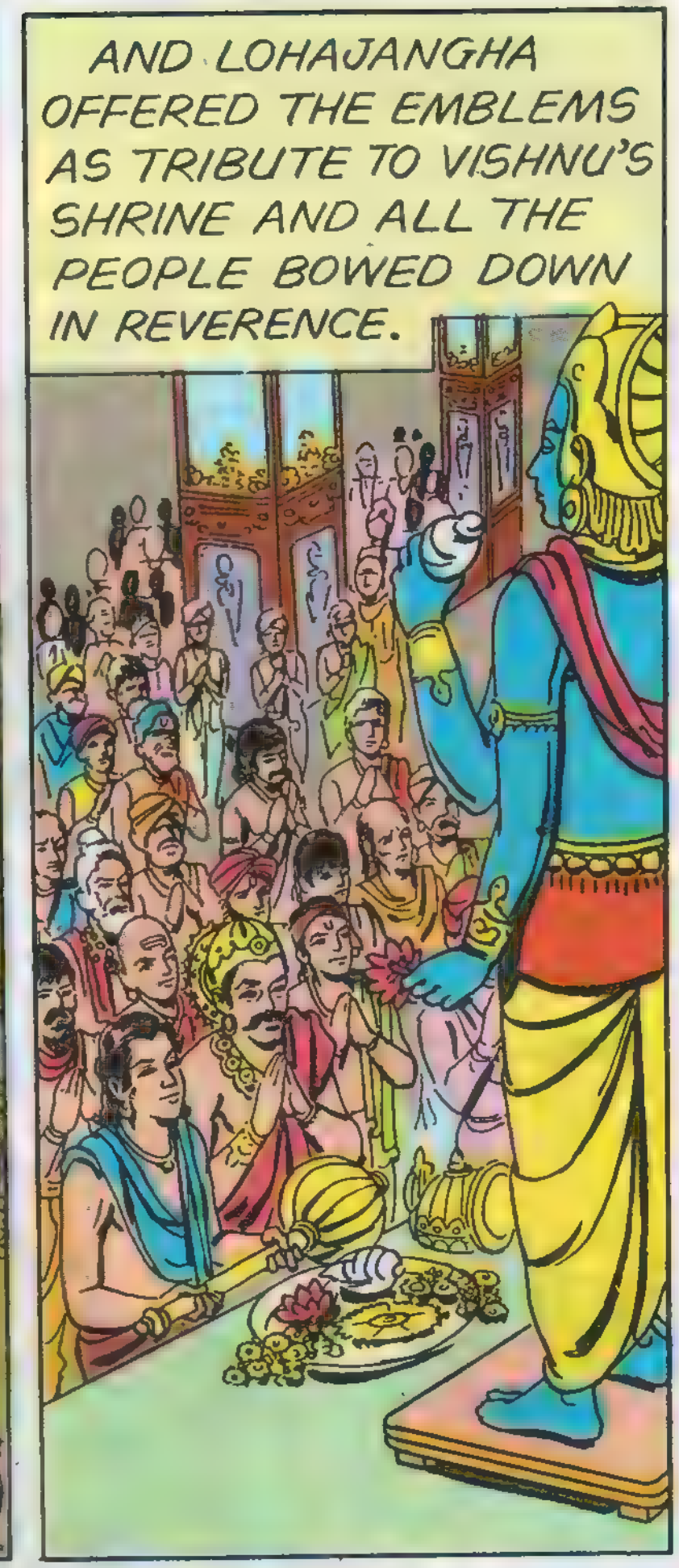
HOW IS IT THAT MY MOTHER IS UP THERE? SHE LEFT WITH LORD VISHNU.

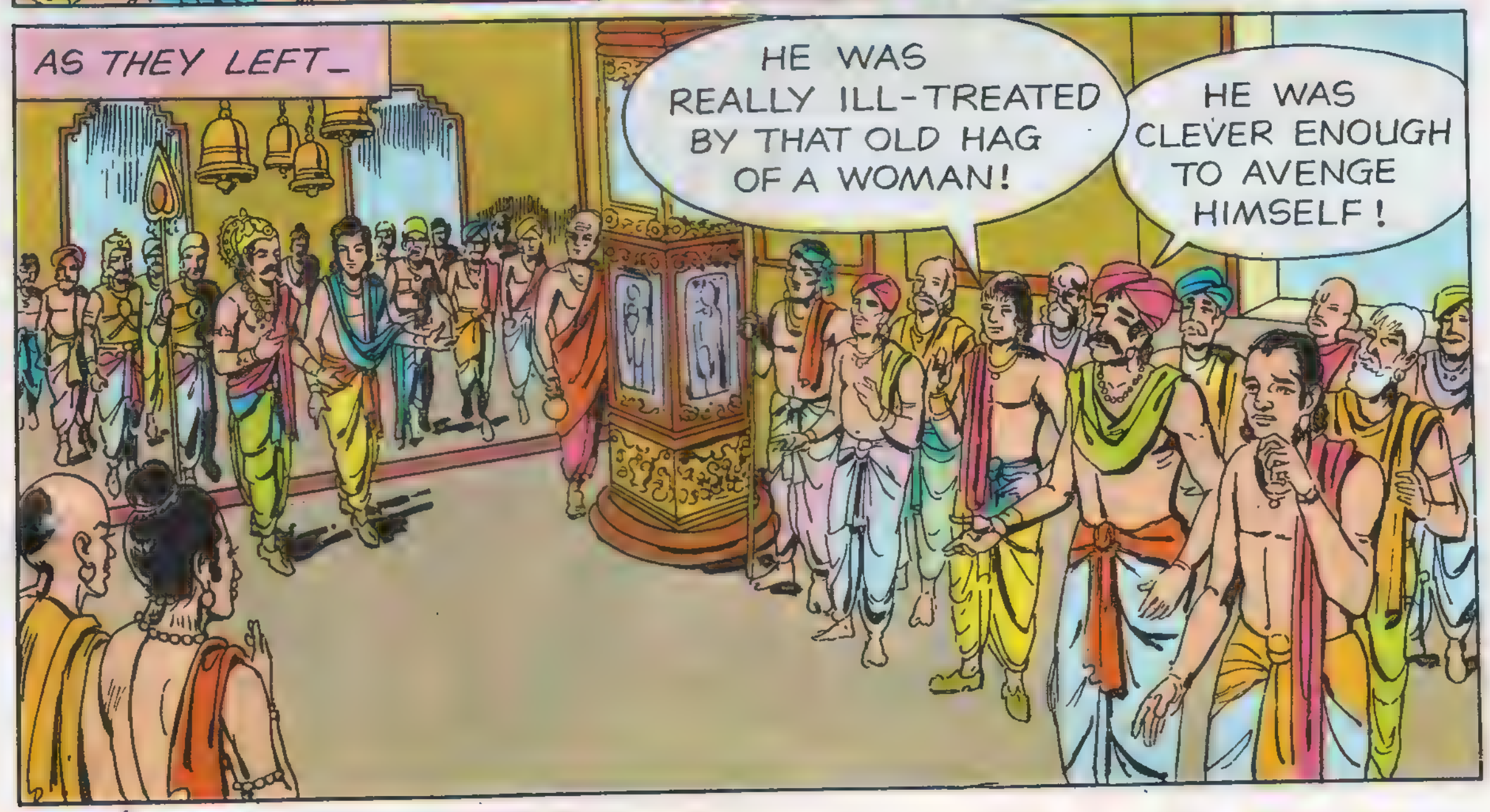

WITH THE HELP OF SOME PEOPLE, RUPINIKA MANAGED TO GET HER MOTHER DOWN.

IN THE GAME OF CUNNING WE THOUGHT MAKARADAN-SHTRA HAD NO EQUAL. BUT HE WHO HAS PUT HER INTO SUCH A PLIGHT IS CERTAINLY HER BETTER.

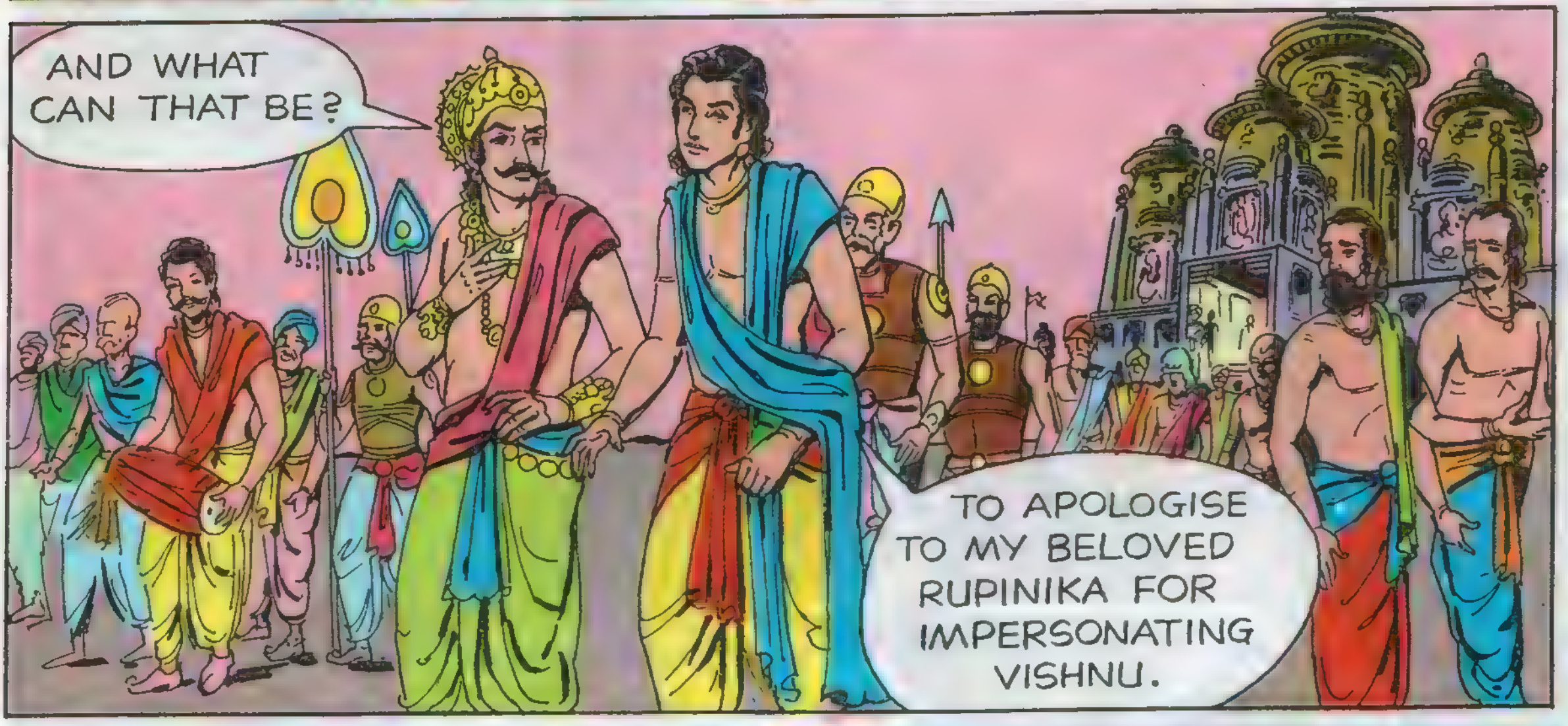

LOHAJANGHA CAME FORWARD.
I AM LOHAJANGHA. MAKARADAN-SHTRA WRONGED ME FOR NO FAULT OF MINE, AND I TOOK MY REVENGE.
BUT HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO HOIST HER UP THERE ?


LOHAJANGHA RELATED HIS ENTIRE TALE TO THE KING.
KING VIBHISHANA GAVE ME THESE EMBLEMS OF VISHNU TO BE OFFERED AT HIS TEMPLE IN MATHURA. BUT I THOUGHT OF A PLAN AND POSING AS VISHNU, HAVE TAUGHT THE GREEDY WOMAN THE LESSON OF HER LIFE.
WELL DONE!


AND LOHAJANGHA OFFERED THE EMBLEMS AS TRIBUTE TO VISHNU'S SHRINE AND ALL THE PEOPLE BOWED DOWN IN REVERENCE.

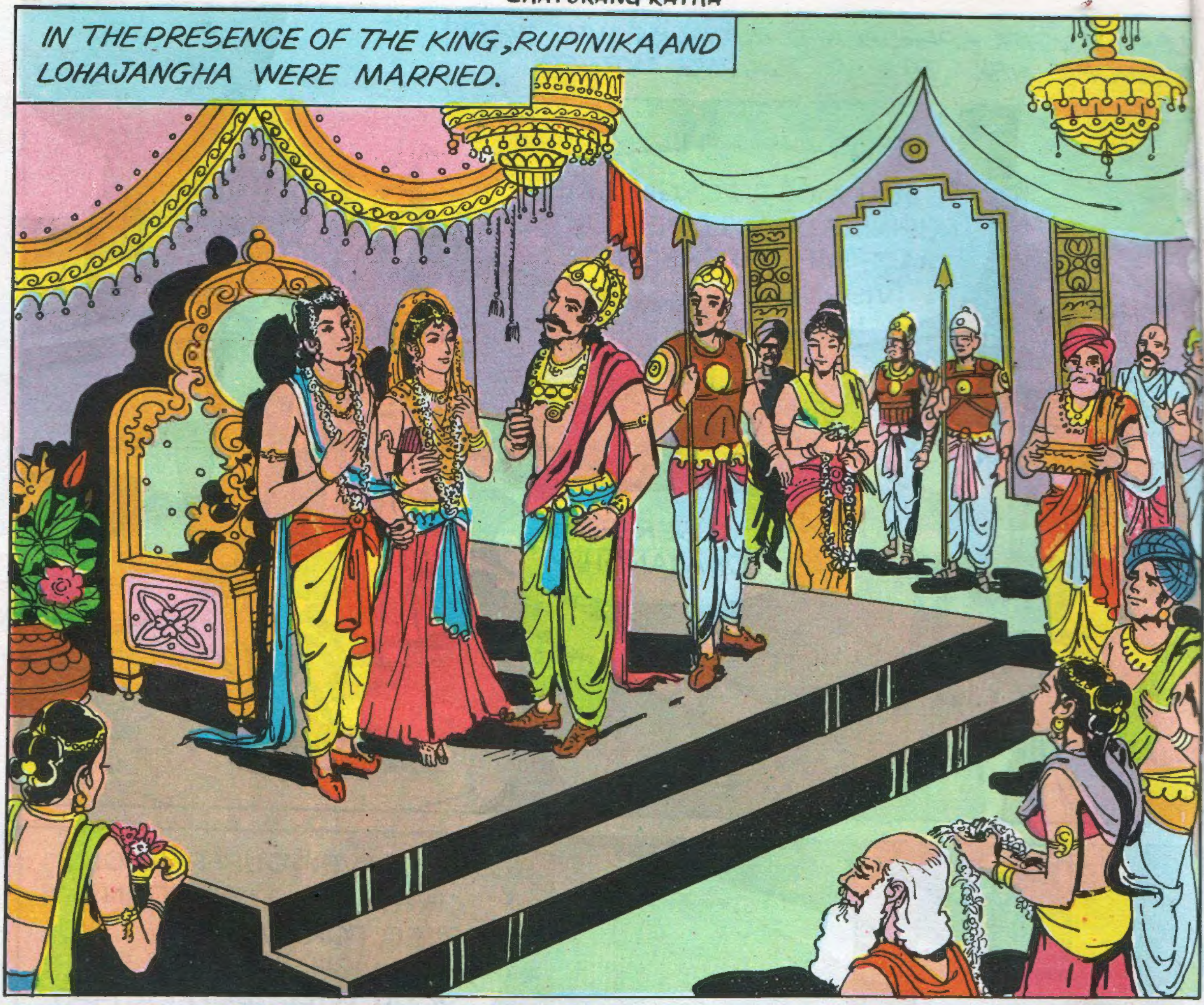

AS THEY LEFT_
HE WAS REALLY ILL-TREATED BY THAT OLD HAG OF A WOMAN!
HE WAS CLEVER ENOUGH TO AVENGE HIMSELF!

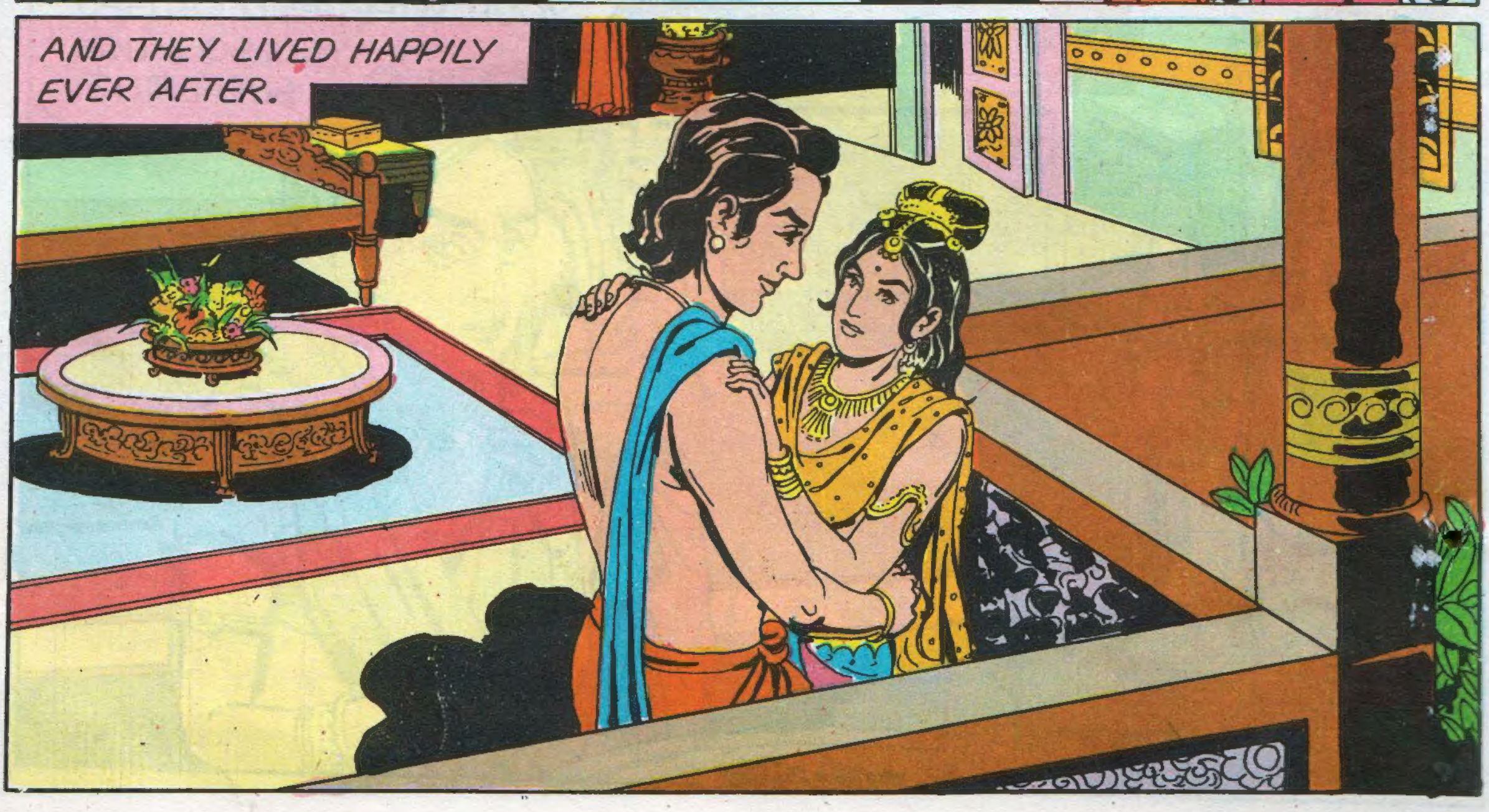
I AM PLEASED WITH YOU LOHAJANGHA, AND OFFER YOU A POSITION AT COURT.
I AM GRATEFUL MY KING, BUT NOW PERMIT ME TO PURSUE ANOTHER MATTER.


AND WHAT CAN THAT BE?
TO APOLOGISE TO MY BELOVED RUPINIKA FOR IMPERSONATING VISHNU.

I HAD FORGOTTEN. SHE IS THE MAIN CAUSE OF ALL THESE ADVENTURES THAT FELL TO YOUR LOT.

LOHAJANGHA APPROACHED RUPINIKA WHO WAS STANDING NEXT TO HER QUAKING MOTHER.
YOU MUST FORGIVE ME, RUPINIKA. MY LOVE FOR YOU MADE ME IMPERSONATE VISHNU.
I UNDERSTAND, LOHAJANGHA.
I CRAVE YOUR PARDON, LOHAJANGHA. BLIND IN MY GREED FOR WEALTH, I DID NOT WISH RUPINIKA TO BE YOUR WIFE, AND CAUSED YOU SO MUCH SUFFERING.


IN THE PRESENCE OF THE KING, RUPINIKA AND LOHAJANGHA WERE MARRIED.


AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

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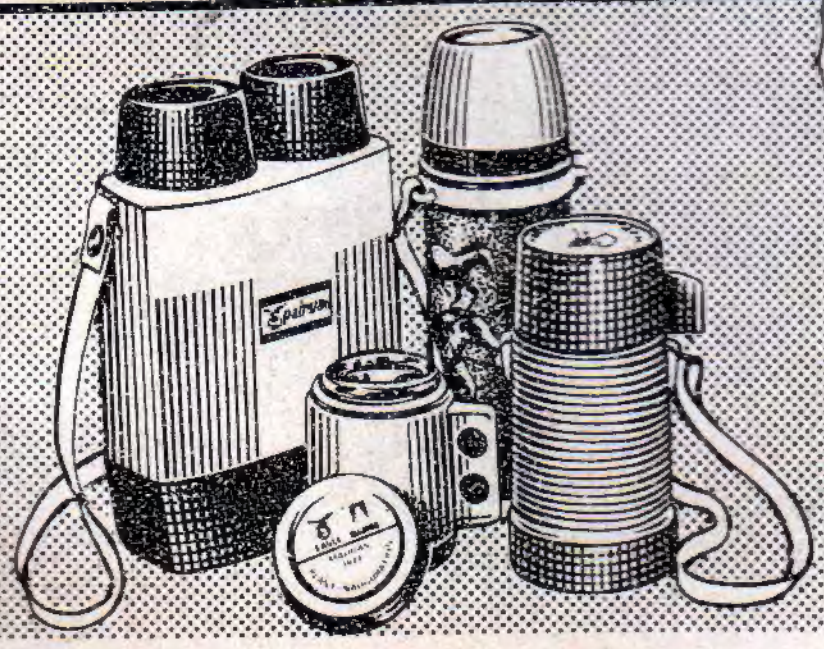
Centres	Timings	Centres	Timings
Ahmedabad	9.30 p.m.	Jaipur	9.30 p.m.
Allahabad	9.30 p.m.	Jodhpur	9.30 p.m.
Bangalore	9.30 p.m.	Jullundur	9.30 p.m.
Bhopal	9.30 p.m. (Tuesday)	Kanpur	9.30 p.m.
Bombay	9.45 p.m.	Lucknow	9.30 p.m.
Calcutta	9.00 p.m.	Nagpur	9.45 p.m.
Chandigarh	9.30 p.m.	Patna	9.30 p.m.
Cuttack	9.30 p.m.	Pune	9.45 p.m.
Delhi	9.45 p.m.	Rajkot	9.30 p.m.
Dharwar	9.30 p.m.	Ranchi	9.30 p.m.
Hyderabad	9.30 p.m.	Srinagar	9.30 p.m.
Indore	9.30 p.m. (Tuesday)	Vijayawada	9.30 p.m.



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